MEDITATIONS & READINGS
ST. ALPHONSUS

MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME III.—PART II.

AFTER PENTECOST
(V. TO XI. SUNDAY)

Edited by Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.SS.R.

VISITS TO THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT and TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, with Prayers for Mass, Preparation for Communion, Thanksgiving, etc, By ST. ALPHONSUS. From 2/6 to 5/-

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Meditations and Readings

FOR

EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of

SAINT ALPHONSUS

Doctor of the Church and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer

VOLUME THREE
PART II.

FOREWORD
BY
HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM

Edited by

JOHN BAPT. COYLE, C.SS.R.

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FOREWORD

As a boy I read with great profit the popular spiritual works of St. Alphonsus Liguori. I am delighted to know that Fr. Coyle is having them republished in an enlarged edition and in the new form of "Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year."

I do not know of any religious books at once so sane, so spiritual and so adapted to the intelligence of the ordinary reader. They go straight to the root of normal spirituality. They are commonsense founded on the Truths of Faith. Such books were never so much needed as at the present day. We are living in an age of secularism. Never before did life offer so many attractions to divert the mind from the consideration of the Eternal Truths. Never before was there such an output of purely secular books, magazines, and newspapers, so smoothly written and so beautifully illustrated that the temptation to read them is universal and almost irresistible. Some of them are mere covers for sensuality, and others are hostile to the Faith, and all have a despiritualising influence on the mind. To counteract the resulting influence we want a corresponding output of wholesome Catholic literature, including books that advertise the attractions of the spiritual life. We want books that will bring home to our youth that there is no

2 505

happiness comparable to the humble joy of the good Christian. We want books that will, with flashes from the Beyond, dissipate the spell that the prospect of sensual pleasure casts over the imagination of youth. We want books, too, that will terrorise the hardened sinner and confirm the struggling aspirant to the higher life in the grim determination to walk in the narrow way. Now such are the ascetic works of St. Liguori that Father Coyle is engaged in having re-published. From my heart I wish him success in this apostolic mission. From my heart I pray that these volumes may have a wide circulation.

It is recognised that St. Liguori was one of the greatest missioners of all time. He was himself a great preacher of the Gospel. He founded the Congregation of the Redemptorists who have been in the thick of the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil for well-nigh two hundred years, and who are only growing more vigorous with time. The Saint was a classical writer of Moral Theology. And while his Moral Theology holds the scales evenly between laxity and rigorism, his spiritual writings hold the scales between sentimental piety and cold ascetical teaching, with a like evenness, which attracts and converts the sinner, encourages the weak, and confirms the strong.

✠ T. P. GILMARTIN,
Archbishop of Tuam.

St. Jarlath's,
28*th April*, 1928.

LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELI,
ARMAGH,
16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I have put off writing to thank you for your interesting and edifying volume, *Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year*, till I should find time to look through it. I have done so now, and I can congratulate you on undertaking a very useful work; and I hope you will be spared till you complete it.

The Ascetic Works of St. Alphonsus have done wonders in conveying solid instruction, nourishing piety, and exciting fervour among the people in every state and stage of life. They have been an ever enduring source of piety, especially in inspiring love of our Holy Redeemer and tender devotion to His Blessed Mother. It is a question whether his great Theological Works have contributed more to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Hence it was not without regret I noticed that these Spiritual Works were not so common among the people as they were in my early days. They seemed to be giving place to more showy and more superficial modern works which are far from breathing the fervent spirit of the great Doctor and Saint. One of the chief fruits which I expect from the work you have undertaken is the redress of this serious spiritual loss.

You have commenced well, and I trust you will be

able to continue till the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus are again as extensively circulated among the people as they were in the past. The scheme you have sketched out for yourself will familiarize the people with the beauty and fervour of St. Alphonsus' Works, and from using your volumes for casual reading they will be likely to drink more deeply of the source of fervour the Saint has opened up to them.

Wishing you every blessing and success in your useful work,

I am,

Dear Father Coyle,

Yours gratefully,

✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE.

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL wrote:

It is a pleasure to me to subscribe my name to the beautiful letter written by my lamented predecessor, his Eminence Cardinal Logue, to commend Father Coyle's publications from the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,
Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.

LETTER OF APPROBATION AND BLESSING FROM MOST REV. PATRICK MURRAY, C.SS.R.,

Superior-General and Rector Major.

J.M.J.A.T. SANT' ALFONSO—VIA MERULANA,
ROMA,
23*rd October*, 1923.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I am very glad to hear that you have the first part of your "Meditations and Readings for every Day of the Year from the Writings of St. Alphonsus" ready for publication, and I wish this and the succeeding Volumes every success. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of these "Meditations and Readings" as is seen from the following statements of two Popes :

His Holiness Pope Pius IX, in speaking of the writings of St. Alphonsus, wrote : "The works of this most holy and learned man, written with extraordinary tender piety and devotion, breathe in every page a great love for Jesus Christ and great confidence in His mercy and merits. They also inspire their readers with the most ardent devotion to the Virgin Mother of God and to the Saints, and they inflame the hearts of men with the desire of receiving the Sacraments, as well as furnish a most abundant supply of excellent admonitions, counsels and directions to those who labour for the salvation of souls."

Pope Benedict XV also wrote recently, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Doctorate of St. Alphonsus, that the excellence and utility of his teaching are becoming every day more apparent, and that his writings are helpful, not only to Theologians and Professors of the

Sacred Sciences, but also to the faithful of every condition of life, to whom he points out the way to solid virtue, and smoothes for them the way to the highest Christian perfection. His Holiness adds that the Saint's one great ambition in all his writings was to make known to all men the infinite amiability of Jesus Christ.

It is unnecessary for me to add anything to these words of two Popes. I wish only to say that this infinite amiability of Jesus Christ is particularly well shown in the present volume, for, in addition to the Meditations and Readings on the Religious State and on other subjects, there are given about forty Meditations on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in which are contained some of the most beautiful and devotional pages written by the Saint. Moreover the division of the ascetic writings of the Saint into two Meditations and a Spiritual Reading for every day of the year, and this arranged in such a way as not to interrupt the sequence of any work of the Saint, will please many, both in the Cloister and in the world, who desire to know and follow in their spiritual life the teachings of this great Doctor of the Church and Director of Souls.

In conclusion, in the name of St. Alphonsus I bless you and these Meditations and Readings with the hope that they may be everywhere known and read and well thought on, so that all may know the infinite amiability and mercy of Jesus Christ and the unspeakable amiability and mercy of His Blessed Mother, and that they may thus seek and love and serve Them alone.

Your devoted servant and confrère,

PATRICK MURRAY, C.SS.R.,
Sup. Gen. and Rector Major.

Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.SS.R.,
St. Joseph's,
Dundalk.

THE EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The Editor has aimed at making each of the Parts of this Series of Meditations and Readings from St. Alphonsus as complete as possible. It has also been his aim and desire to make each a volume that would do good service at the time of a Spiritual Retreat.

In this particular Part of the Series quite a large number of Meditations, which St. Alphonsus himself intended specially for those making a Retreat, are included, and besides these Meditations, a short, but very precious treatise of the Saint on *Closed Retreats* has been inserted as Spiritual Reading. After reading the Saint's pages one would wish to proclaim him the Apostle of the *Closed Retreats* that are having in many countries such excellent results of late years.

We cannot do better than quote here what St. Alphonsus says in another place about the value of Retreats made in private. He writes : " There can be no doubt that Retreats made in common, in which the meditations and lectures are given by a priest, are very profitable; but for all who desire to advance in Divine love, one great means is to perform the same Spiritual Exercises in a private Retreat. It is in total solitude that God speaks most efficaciously to the souls of His beloved ones, and it is impossible for a Christian to make such Retreats and not come forth from each a different man. In order the better to enjoy God, Who in solitude

communicates Himself more familiarly to those who seek Him, the Saints retired into caves and deserts. St. Bernard says he learned more about Divine things mid the beeches and the oaks of the forest than he ever learned from masters or from books. You can make the same solitude for yourself even in your own house. Strive to avail of it for a Retreat of at least eight days.

"But others, you will say, do not make such Retreats. Well, be it so; what then? If others do not make Retreats, do you at least make them, and your good example will win over others to do the same. Even if it be looked upon as singular, such singularities are pleasing to God. No one, as St. Bernard says, can become perfect if he be not singular in the practice of virtue and in availing himself of the means of salvation."

With these simple, beautiful lines from St. Alphonsus, we introduce this new volume of MEDITATIONS AND READINGS to our Catholic people, only asking from them a remembrance in their prayers.

—THE EDITOR.

Clonard Monastery, Belfast,
Feast of Corpus Christi,
May 30, 1929.

CONTENTS

PAGE

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—

Salvation is our only business in this world 1

I.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence 3

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity beareth all things."
I.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ... 6

MONDAY— Loss of the soul, an irreparable evil 9

II.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence 11

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity beareth all things."
II.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ... 13

TUESDAY— We must before all things secure the salvation of our souls 15

III.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence 17

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity beareth all things."
III.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ... 19

PAGE

WEDNESDAY— The vanity of the world—The goods of this world are false goods 20

IV.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence 22

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity beareth all things."
IV.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ... 24

THURSDAY— The vanity of the world—The goods of this world pass quickly ... 26

V.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence 28

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity beareth all things."
V.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ... 30

FRIDAY— The vanity of the world—Death shows us the vanity of the world ... 32

VI.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence 34

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity beareth all things."
VI.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ... 36

SATURDAY— The Mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary 38

VII.—The advantage of a Retreat made in solitude and silence 40

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity beareth all things."
VII.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ... 43

PAGE

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—

Our journey into Eternity. We are only Pilgrims on this earth ... 46

Prayer, the Great Means of Salvation 48

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity beareth all things."
VIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ bears all things for Him, and especially illness, poverty and contempt ... 51

MONDAY— Our journey into Eternity. The folly of those who do not consider it ... 53

Prayer, its Necessity.
I.—It is a means necessary for salvation 55

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity believeth all things."
IX.—He that loves Jesus Christ believes all His words 59

TUESDAY— Our journey into Eternity.—Let us profit by the time that is given us 61

Prayer, its Necessity.
II.—Without Prayer it is impossible to resist temptations, and to keep the commandments 63

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity believeth all things."
X.—He that loves Jesus Christ believes all His words 68

WEDNESDAY— Mortal sin—its malice 69

Prayer, its Necessity.
III.—On invoking the Saints, and on praying to the Souls in Purgatory 72

PAGE

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
" Charity believeth all things."
XI.—He that loves Jesus Christ believes all His words 76

THURSDAY— Abuse of Divine Mercy 78

Prayer, its Necessity.
IV.—On invoking the Saints, and on praying to the Souls in Purgatory and helping them by our prayers 80

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
" Charity hopeth all things."
XII.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him 84

FRIDAY— Venial Sin 85

Prayer, its Necessity
V.—The Intercession of the Blessed Virgin 88

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
" Charity hopeth all things."
XIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him 92

SATURDAY— The Mercy of the Blessed Virgin towards sinners who invoke her ... 93

Prayer, its Power.
I.—Its power and excellence with God 95
II.—Power of Prayer against temptation 97

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
" Charity hopeth all things."
XIV.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him 100

PAGE

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—

Death—The worlding at the approach of Death 101

Prayer, its Power.
III.—God is always ready to hear our prayer.
IV.—The power of prayer to obtain great things for us 105

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
" Charity hopeth all things."
XV.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him 110

MONDAY— Death, the Final Preparations ... 111

Prayer, Conditions of Prayer.
I.—That the Prayer be offered for one's self or for things necessary for Salvation 114

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
" Charity hopeth all things."
XVI.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him 119

TUESDAY— Death, the last agony 121

Prayer, Conditions of Prayer.
II.—That we pray piously ... 123

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
" Charity hopeth all things."
XVII. He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him 128

WEDNESDAY— Death—The death of the Just ... 130

Prayer, Conditions of Prayer.
III.—Confidence, its excellence and necessity 132

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
" Charity hopeth all things."
XVIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ... 135

		PAGE
THURSDAY—	The Particular Judgment	137
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer. IV.—Confidence—the foundation of one's confidence	139
	The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ. *"Charity hopeth all things."* XIX.—He that loves Jesus Christ hopes for all things from Him ...	143
FRIDAY—	The Amiable Heart of Jesus ...	145
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer. V.—The Prayer of Sinners ...	148
	The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ. *"Charity endureth all things."* XX.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong loves does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	153
SATURDAY—	Mary is the hope of sinners ...	155
	Prayer, Conditions of Prayer. VI.—Perseverance	157
	The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ. *"Charity endureth all things."* XXI.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	164
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—		
	Our Eternal Salvation depends upon ourselves	166
	Prayer. First Preliminary Proposition.—(*a*) God wishes all men to be saved...	168
	The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ. *"Charity endureth all things."* XXII.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations	177

PAGE

MONDAY— The General Judgment 180

Prayer.
(*b*) Therefore Christ died to save all men 182

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 189

TUESDAY— Remorse of Christians in Hell ... 191

Prayer.
Second Preliminary Proposition—God gives to all men the graces necessary for salvation whereby one may be saved that corresponds with them ... 193

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXIV.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 199

WEDNESDAY— Christians in Hell know they have been given all the graces necessary for salvation 201

Prayer.
God gives the grace of Salvation even to obstinate sinners 204

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXV.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 210

THURSDAY— Our ingratitude towards Jesus Christ 213

Prayer.
God gives to all men the grace to pray.
I.—The famous Theologians who teach this doctrine 215

PAGE

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXVI.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 221

FRIDAY— The love of Jesus for us demands our love 223

Prayer.
God gives to all men the grace to pray.
II.—Further proof 225

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXVII.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 233

SATURDAY— Mary is the hope of all sinners ... 236

Prayer.
God gives to all the grace to pray.
III.—Theological reasons that justify this doctrine 238

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXVIII.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong loves does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 246

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—

The desire Jesus had to suffer for us 248

Prayer.
Conclusion 250

The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXIX.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 254

PAGE

MONDAY— "Patience hath a perfect work" ... 256
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 258
The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXX.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 261

TUESDAY— "Patience hath a perfect work" ... 263
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 265
The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.
"Charity endureth all things."
XXXI.—He that loves Jesus Christ with a strong love does not cease to love Him in the midst of temptations and desolations 269

WEDNESDAY— "Patience hath a perfect work" ... 272
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 274
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 276

THURSDAY— "Patience hath a perfect work" ... 278
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 280
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 283

FRIDAY— "Patience hath a Perfect Work" ... 285
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 287
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 291

SATURDAY— Mary is the Hope of all Sinners ... 292
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 295
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 299

PAGE

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—

"Patience hath a perfect work" ... 301
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 303
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 306

MONDAY— "Patience hath a perfect work" ... 308
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 312
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 315

TUESDAY— Doing God's Will your sanctification 318
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 320
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 324

WEDNESDAY— Doing God's Will your sanctification 326
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 328
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 331

THURSDAY— Doing God's Will your sanctification 334
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 336
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 339

FRIDAY— Doing God's Will, your sanctification 342
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 344
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 349

SATURDAY— Mary is the hope of all sinners ... 351
The Doctor and Apostle of Prayer. St. Alphonsus 354
Considerations on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ 360

MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

SALVATION IS OUR ONLY BUSINESS IN THIS WORLD.

One thing is necessary (Luke x. 42). It is not necessary we should be rich, or honoured, or in the enjoyment of good health, but it is necessary we should be saved. For this end alone has God placed us in this world, and woe to us if we do not attain it!

I.

Of all our affairs there is none more important than that of our eternal salvation, on which depends our happiness or misery for eternity.

One thing is necessary. It is not necessary that we should be rich, honoured, or in the enjoyment of good health, but it is necessary that we should be saved. For this end alone has God placed us in the world; and woe to us if we do not attain it!

St. Francis Xavier said that the only good to be obtained in this world is salvation; and the only evil to be dreaded, damnation. What matter if we are poor, or despised, or infirm? If we are saved we shall be happy for ever. On the contrary, what does it avail to be great, or to be monarchs? If we are lost, we shall be miserable for all eternity.

O God, what will become of me? I may be saved, and I may also be lost! And if I may be lost, why do I not resolve to adhere more closely to Thee?

My Jesus, have pity on me. I will amend my life.

Give me Thy assistance. Thou hast died to save me, and shall I, notwithstanding, forfeit my salvation?

II.

Have we already done enough to secure salvation? Are we already secure of not falling into hell?

What exchange shall a man give for his soul?—(Matt. xvi. 26). If he lose his soul, what will compensate him for his loss?

What have not the Saints done to secure their salvation? How many kings and queens have renounced their kingdoms and shut themselves up in cloisters! How many young men have left their country, and have gone to live in deserts! How many young virgins have renounced marriage with the great ones of the world, to go and give their lives for Jesus Christ! And what are we doing?

O my God, how much has Jesus Christ done for our salvation! He spent thirty-three years in toil and labour; He gave His Blood and His Life; and shall we, through our own fault, be lost?

O Lord, I give Thee thanks for not having called me out of the world when I had forfeited Thy grace. Had I died then, what would have become of me for all eternity?

God desires that all should be saved: *He will have all men to be saved.*—(1 Tim. ii. 4). If we are lost, it will be entirely our own fault. And this will be our greatest torment in hell.

St. Teresa says that even the loss of a trifle, of an ornament, of a ring, when it has happened through our own carelessness, occasions us the greatest uneasiness. What a torment, then, will it be to the damned to have wilfully lost all—their souls, Heaven, and God!

Alas! death approaches; and what have I done for life eternal?

O my God, for how many years have I deserved to dwell in hell, where I could not repent, nor love Thee! Now that I can repent and love Thee, I will repent and I will love Thee.

Spiritual Reading

*I.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.**

I have received your last letter in which you tell me you are still undecided as to the state of life you should choose, and that having communicated to your Pastor the advice I gave you—namely, to go for that purpose to perform the Spiritual Exercises in the house your father owns in the country—the said Pastor answered you it was not necessary to go there to torture your brains for eight days in solitude, but that it was enough for you to attend the Retreat he would soon have for the people in his own church. Now, as on this point of making the Exercises you again ask my advice, it is necessary I should answer you more at length, and show you how much greater the fruit of the Spiritual Exercises is when they are performed in silence, in some retired place, than in public, when one is obliged during the time to live in one's own house and converse with relatives and friends : and the more so in your case, for, as you write to me, you have in your own home no quiet room to which you can retire.

Besides, I am very much in favour of a Retreat performed in solitude, closed away from the world, as I know it is to such a Retreat I owe my own conversion and my resolution to give up the world. I will later suggest to you the means and precautions to be taken during the Spiritual Exercises in order to reap from them the fruit you desire. I beg of you, when you have read this letter yourself, to give it to your Rev. Parish Priest that he may read it also.

Let us, then, speak first of the great benefit of the Spiritual Exercises when performed in solitude, where one converses with God alone, and let us see the reason for this.

* This little treatise was written by St. Alphonsus in the form of a letter to a young man who consulted him as to the state of life he should choose.—ED.

The truths of eternal life, such as the great affair of our salvation, the value of the time God gives us that we may amass merits for a happy Eternity, the obligations under which we are to love God for His infinite goodness and the immense love He has for us, —these and similar things are not seen with the eyes of the flesh, but only with the eyes of the mind. It is, on the contrary, certain that, unless our understanding represents to the will the value of a good or the greatness of an evil, we shall never embrace that good nor reject that evil. And this is the ruin of those who are attached to this world. They live in darkness, and not seeing the greatness of eternal good and eternal evil, and allured by the senses, they give themselves up to forbidden pleasure and thus miserably perish.

Wherefore the Holy Ghost admonishes us that in order to avoid sin we must keep before our eyes the Last Things which are to come upon us; that is, Death, with which all the goods of this earth will come to an end for us, and the Divine Judgment, in which we shall have to give to God an account of our whole life. *Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin*—(Ecclus. vii. 40). And in another place God says : *Oh, that they would be wise and would understand and would provide for their last end*—(Deut. xxxii. 29). By which words He wishes us to understand that if men would consider the things of the next life, they would all certainly take care to sanctify themselves, and would not expose themselves to the danger of an unhappy life in Eternity. But they shut their eyes to the light and thus, remaining blind, precipitate themselves into an abyss of evil. This is why the Saints always prayed the Lord to give them light. *Enlighten my eyes, that I never sleep in death* —(Ps. xii. 4). *May God cause the light of his countenance to shine upon us*—(Ps. lxvi. 2). *Make the way known to me wherein I should walk*—(Ps. cxlii 8). *Give me understanding and I will learn thy commandments* (Ps. cxviii. 73).

Now in order to obtain this Divine light we must come close to God. *Come ye to him and be enlightened*

–(Ps. xxxiii. 6). For, as St. Augustine tells us, that as e cannot see the sun without the light of the sun itself, we cannot see the light of God but by the light of od Himself. This light is obtained in the Spiritual xercises; by them we come close to God, and God lightens us with His light. The Spiritual Exercises ean nothing else than that we retire for a time from ntercourse with the world, and go to converse with God lone, where God speaks to us by His inspirations, and e speak to God in our meditations by acts of love, by epenting of the sins by which we have displeased Him, y offering ourselves to serve Him for the future with all ur heart, and by beseeching Him to make known to us is will, and give us strength to accomplish it.

Holy Job says : *Now I should have rest in my sleep ith kings and consuls of the earth who build themselves olitudes*—(Job iii. 13). Who are these kings that build emselves solitudes? They are, as St. Gregory says, hose who rise above this world, and withdraw from its umults to render themselves fit to talk alone with God. They build solitudes, that is, they separate themelves as far as possible from the tumult of the world, in rder to be alone and to become fit to speak with God."

One day as St. Arsenius was reflecting on the means hat he should take to become a saint, God caused him to ear these words : *Fuge* ! *Tace* ! *Quiesce* ! " Fly ! Be silnt ! And rest !" Fly from the world ; be silent ; cease to alk with men, and speak only with Me, and thus rest in eace and solitude. In conformity with this, St. Anselm rote to one worried by many worldly occupations, who omplained that he had not a moment of peace, and gave he following advice : "Leave your occupations for a hile ; hide yourself from your tumultuous thoughts ; pply yourself for a time to contemplate God and rest n Him : Say to God : Now teach my heart where and ow I may seek Thee ; where and how I may find Thee." Words that are applicable, each and all, to yourself. Fly, says he, for a short time from those earthly occuations which render you so unquiet, and rest in solitude ith God. Say to Him : O Lord, show me where and

how I may find Thee, that I may speak alone with Thee, and at the same time hear Thy words.

God speaks indeed to those who seek Him, but He does not speak in the midst of the tumult of the world. The Lord is not in the commotion of the earthquake, as was said to Elias when God called him to solitude. The voice of God, as it is said in the same place, is as the breath of a gentle air, which is scarcely heard, and then not by the ear of the body, but by that of the heart, without noise and in a sweet retreat. This is exactly what the Lord says through Osee : *I will lead her into solitude, and I will speak to her heart*—(ii. 14). When the Lord wishes to draw a soul to Himself, He leads it into solitude, far from the embarrassment of the world and intercourse with men, and there speaks to it in words of fire. The word of God is said to be of fire, because it melts a soul, as the sacred Spouse says : *My soul melted when he* (*my beloved*) *spoke*—(Cant. v. 6). It prepares the soul to submit readily to the direction of God, and to embrace the manner of life which God wishes. The word of God is so exceedingly efficacious that at the very time it is heard it operates in the soul all that God requires.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity beareth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY, AND CONTEMPT.

I.

Father Balthazar Alvarez said that a Christian must not imagine himself to have made any progress in perfection until he has succeeded in penetrating his heart with a lasting sense of the sorrows, poverty, and ignominies

of Jesus Christ, so as to be able to support with loving patience every sorrow, privation, and contempt, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

In the first place, let us speak of bodily infirmities, which, when borne with patience, merit for us a beautiful crown.

St. Vincent de Paul said: "Did we but know how precious a treasure is contained in infirmities, we would accept them with joy as the greatest of all possible blessings." Hence the Saint himself, though constantly afflicted with ailments that often left him no rest day or night, bore them with so much peace and serenity of countenance that no one could guess that anything ailed him at all. Oh, how edifying to see a sick person bear his illness with a peaceful countenance, as did St. Francis de Sales! When he was ill, he simply made known his complaint to the physician, obeyed him exactly by taking the prescribed medicines, however nauseous; and for the rest, he remained at peace, never uttering a single complaint in all his sufferings. What a contrast to this is the conduct of those who do nothing but complain even for the most trifling indisposition, and who would like to have around them all their relatives and friends in order to have their sympathy! Far different was the instruction of St. Teresa to her nuns: "My sisters, learn to suffer something for the love of Jesus Christ, without letting all the world know of it." One Good Friday Jesus Christ favoured the Venerable Father Louis da Ponte with so much bodily suffering that no part of him was exempt from its particular pain; he mentioned his severe sufferings to a friend, but he was afterwards so sorry at having done so that he made a vow never again to reveal to anybody whatever he might afterwards have to suffer. I say "he was favoured"; for, to the Saints, the illnesses and pains which God sends them are real favours.

II.

One day as St. Francis of Assisi lay on his bed in excruciating torments, a companion said to him:

"Father, beg of God to ease your pains, and not to lay so heavy a hand upon you." On hearing this the Saint instantly leaped from his bed, and going down on his knees, thanked God for his sufferings; then, turning to his companion he said: "Listen; did I not know that you so spoke from simplicity, I would refuse ever to see you again."

Some one who is sick will say it is not so much the infirmity itself that afflicts me as that it prevents me from going to church to perform my devotions, to communicate, and to hear Holy Mass; I cannot go to choir to recite the Divine Office with my brethren; I cannot celebrate Mass; I cannot pray; for my head is aching with pain, and light almost to fainting. But tell me now, if you please, why do you wish to go to church or to choir? Why would you communicate and say or hear Holy Mass? Is it to please God? But it is not now the pleasure of God that you say Office; that you communicate, or hear Mass; but that you remain patiently on this bed, and support the pains of this infirmity. But you are not pleased with my speaking thus; then you are not seeking to do what is pleasing to God, but what is pleasing to yourself. The Blessed John of Avila wrote as follows to a priest who so complained to him: "My friend, busy not yourself with what you would do if you were well, but be content to remain ill as long as God thinks fit. If you seek the will of God, what matters it to you whether you be well or ill?"

ST. ALB

Monday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

LOSS OF THE SOUL, AN IRREPARABLE EVIL.

How long shall we delay? Until we have to weep with the damned, saying: *Ergo erravimus*! *We therefore have erred*!—(Wis. v. 6), and there is now no longer, or ever shall be, any remedy for us? For every other misfortune in this world there is some remedy, but for the loss of the soul, there is none.

I.

And how long shall we delay? Until we have to weep with the damned, saying: *Ergo erravimus*! *We therefore have erred*!—and there is now no longer, or ever shall be, any remedy for us?

For every other misfortune in this world there is some remedy, but for the loss of the soul there is none.

What pains and trouble men take to obtain wealth, dignities, pleasures! But what are they doing to save their souls? Nothing; as though the loss of the soul were but of little consequence!

How much diligence in preserving bodily health! The best physicians, the best remedies, the best climate, are sought after. And as regards the health of the soul, what great negligence!

O my God, I will no longer resist Thy calls! Who knows but that the words which I am now reading may be my last call from God!

Can we be sensible of the danger of being lost forever and not tremble? And do we delay to apply a remedy to the disorders of our consciences?

My soul, how many graces has not God bestowed upon you that you may be saved! He has caused you to be born in the bosom of the true Church. How many advantages for becoming a Saint. Sermons, confessions, the good example of companions. How many lights, how many loving calls in Spiritual Exercises, in Meditation, in Holy Communion! How many mercies has He not shown you! How long has He not waited for you! How many times has He not pardoned you!—graces which He has not bestowed on so many others.

II.

What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it?—(Is. v. 4). What more, says Almighty God, ought I to do for your soul? For how many years have you been in the world and what fruit have you hitherto brought forth?

If we had been allowed to choose the means of salvation, what more easy and effectual means could we have chosen?

Alas! if we do not avail ourselves of so many graces, they will serve only to render our death the more miserable.

To become a saint it is not necessary to have ecstasies and visions; sufficient for you are the ordinary means which you possess. Meditate, communicate frequently, read spiritual books, fly all sinful occasions, and you will become a saint.

O God, already have I lived many years in the world, and what have I hitherto gained? O Jesus! Thy precious Blood, Thy death upon the Cross, are my hope!

If this night I were to die, should I be satisfied with my past life? No; and why do I delay? Death may come, and I may have to lament and say: Alas! my life is now at an end, and I have done nothing!

What a grace would it be for a sick man, already despaired of by his physicians, to be allowed another year, or even another month! And God grants me this time; and how shall I employ it for the future?

O Lord, since Thou hast waited for me until now, I will no longer disregard Thee. Here I am! Tell me what Thou requirest of me, and I will do it. I will not wait to give myself to Thee until time for me be no more. O Jesus! I will never more offend Thee. I will spend the remainder of my life in bewailing my past sins, and in loving Thee, the God of my soul.

Spiritual Reading

II.—THE ADVANTAGES OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

One day the Lord said to St. Teresa: "There are many souls to whom I would willingly speak, but the world makes so great a noise in their hearts that My voice cannot be heard. Oh, if they would but separate themselves a little from the world!" Thus, then, my very dear friend, the Lord wishes to speak to you, but alone and in solitude; since if He would speak to you in your own house, your relations, your friends, and your domestic occupations would continue to make a noise in your heart, and you would be unable to hear His voice. The Saints have for this reason left their homes and their country, and gone to hide themselves in caverns or deserts, or at least in a cell in some Religious house, there to find God and hear His voice. St. Eucherius relates that a certain person seeking a place in which he could find God, went for this purpose to ask counsel from a master of the spiritual life. The man of God led him to a solitary place and then said: "Behold, here God may be found!" adding nothing more. By this he wished him to understand that God is not to be found in the midst of the noise of the world, but in solitude. St. Bernard says that he learned to know God better amongst the beeches and oaks than in all the learned books he had ever studied.

Worldlings love to be in company with friends, to talk and divert themselves; but the desire of the Saints is to live in solitary places, in the midst of forests, or in caverns, there to converse alone with God Who in solitude familiarly converses with souls as a friend with his friend. "Oh, Solitude," exclaims St. Jerome, "in which God familiarly converses with His servants!" The Venerable Vincent Caraffa said that if it had been free to him to wish for anything in this world, he would have asked for nothing but a little grotto with a piece of bread and a spiritual book, there always to live far from men, and conversing alone with God. The Spouse of the Canticles, praising the beauty of a soul living in solitude, compares it to the beauty of the turtle-dove: *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's*—(Cant. i. 9), precisely because the turtle-dove avoids the company of other birds, and always lives in the most solitary places. Hence it is that the holy Angels are filled with admiration and joy at the beauty and splendour of a soul ascending into Heaven after a life hidden and solitary as in a desert: *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights?*—(Cant. viii. 5).

Now I have written all these things in order to inspire you with a love for holy solitude, for I hope that in the Exercises you are going to perform you will not have to torture your brains, as your pastor said, but that the Lord will make you taste so great a spiritual delight, that you will come out of your Retreat with such an affection for the Spiritual Exercises that you will not fail hereafter to go through them every year. This will be of immense advantage to your soul, whatever state of life you may choose, because in the midst of the world, its various occupations, disturbances, and distractions always produce dryness of spirit, so that it is necessary from time to time to refresh and renew it, as St. Paul exhorts: *Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind*—(Ephes. iv. 23).

King David, troubled by earthly cares, wished to have wings and to fly from the bustle of the world in order to find rest: *Who will give me wings . . . and I will fly away*

and be at rest?—(Ps. liv. 7). But being unable to leave the world in body, he at least sought from time to time to withdraw himself from the affairs of the realm he governed and dwelt in solitude conversing with God, and thus his spirit found peace. *I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness*—(Ps. v. 8).

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity beareth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

You say you are unable even to pray, because your head is so weak. Be it so: you cannot meditate; but why cannot you make acts of resignation to the will of God? If you would only make these acts, you could not make a better prayer, welcoming with love all the torments that assail you. Thus did St. Vincent de Paul act. When attacked by a serious illness, he was wont to keep himself tranquilly in the presence of God, without forcing his mind to dwell on any particular subject; his sole exercise was to elicit some short acts from time to time, as of love, of confidence, of thanksgiving, and more frequently of resignation, especially in the crisis of his sufferings. St. Francis de Sales made this remark: "Considered in themselves tribulations are terrifying; but considered in the will of God, they are lovely and delightful." You cannot make meditation, you say, and what more exquisite prayer than to cast a look from time to time on your crucified Lord, and to offer Him your pains, uniting the little that you endure with the overwhelming torments that afflicted Jesus on the Cross!

II.

There was a certain pious lady lying bed-ridden with many ailments, and on the servant putting the Crucifix into her hands and telling her to pray to God to deliver her from her miseries, she made answer: "But how can you desire me to seek to descend from the Cross, whilst I hold in my hands a God crucified? God forbid that I should do so! I will suffer for Him Who chose to suffer torments for me incomparably greater than mine." This was, indeed, precisely what Jesus Christ said to St. Teresa when she was labouring under serious illness; He appeared to her all covered with Wounds, and then said to her: "Behold, My daughter, the bitterness of My sufferings, and consider if yours equal Mine." Hence the Saint was accustomed to say in the midst of all her infirmities: "When I remember in how many ways my Saviour suffered, though He was innocence itself, I know not how it could enter my head to complain of my sufferings." During a period of thirty-eight years St. Lidwina was afflicted with numberless diseases—fevers, gout in the feet and hands, and sores, all her life-time; nevertheless, from never losing sight of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, she maintained an unbroken cheerfulness and joy. In like manner, St. Joseph of Leonessa, a Capuchin, when the surgeon was about to amputate his arm, and his brethren would have bound him to prevent his stirring from vehemence of pain, seized hold of the Crucifix and exclaimed: "Wherefore bind me? Wherefore bind me? Behold Who it is that binds me to support every suffering patiently for love of Him!" And so he bore the operation without a murmur. St. Jonas the Martyr, after passing the entire night immersed in ice water by order of the tyrant, declared next morning that he had never spent a happier night, because he had pictured to himself Jesus hanging on the Cross; and thus, compared with the torments of Jesus, his own had seemed rather caresses than sufferings.

Tuesday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

WE MUST BEFORE ALL THINGS SECURE THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS.

Let us proceed at once with the work of our soul's salvation, for death is at hand. What we can do to-day let us not put off till to-morrow. Time passes and returns no more.

I.

Let us proceed at once with the work of our soul's salvation, for death is at hand. What we can do to-day let us not put off till to-morrow. Time passes and returns no more.

Every one says, at the hour of death : Oh, that I had been a saint ! But of what avail will such regrets be when the oil fails, and the lamp will soon be extinguished ?

We shall say when death comes : What would it have cost me to have avoided that occasion, to have borne with that person, to have broken off that correspondence, to have yielded that point of honour ? But I did not do so : and now what will become of me ?

Let us not think that we can do too much to gain eternal salvation. " No security can be too great," says St. Bernard, " where Eternity is at stake."

To secure our salvation, we must be resolved to adopt the means. Inclination will not be sufficient ; nor will it serve us to say, I will do it by and by. Hell is filled with souls who said : By and by ! By and by ! Death came in the meantime, and they were lost.

O Lord, help me! I will say to Thee, with St. Catherine of Genoa: "My Jesus, no more sins, no more sins!" I renounce all things to please Thee.

II.

The Apostle says, *With fear and trembling work out your salvation*—(Phil. ii. 12). He who trembles at the thought of being lost, always recommends himself to God, avoids the occasions of sin, and will be saved.

To be saved we must use violence. Heaven is not given to indolent cowards. *The violent bear it away*—(Matt. xi. 12).

O Lord, how many promises have I not made Thee! But my promises have all been treasons. I will never betray Thee more; help me, grant that I may die rather than offend Thee.

Ask, says our Lord, *and you shall receive.*—(Jo. xvi. 24), by which He manifests to us His great desire that we should be saved. If any one should say to his friend: Ask of me what you please, he could say nothing more. Let us, then, ever pray to God, and we shall be enriched with graces, and secure of salvation.

My dear Jesus, cast Thine eyes on my miseries and have pity on me. I have been forgetful of Thee, but Thou hast not forgotten me. I love Thee, my Love, with all my soul; I detest all the offences I have committed against Thee above every evil. Pardon me, my God, and forget my many acts of ingratitude. And since Thou knowest my weakness, do not abandon me; enlighten me, and strengthen me to conquer all things to please Thee. Grant that I may forget all, that I may think only of Thy love and the mercies by which Thou hast so powerfully obliged me to love Thee. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading

III.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

Jesus Christ, Who had no need of solitude to be recollected and united with God, in order to set us an example, often retired from intercourse with men and withdrew to mountains or into deserts to pray: *Having dismissed the multitude he went into a mountain alone to pray*—(Matt. xiv. 23); and *He retired into the desert and prayed*—(Luke v. 16). He also desired His disciples, after the fatigue of their missions, to retire to some solitary place to rest in spirit: *Come apart into a desert place and rest a little*—(Mark vi. 31), declaring by this that the spirit, even amidst spiritual occupations, being obliged to treat with men, becomes somewhat relaxed, whence it is very necessary to renew it in solitude and retreat.

Worldlings, who are accustomed to divert themselves in conversations, at banquets and plays, imagine that in solitude, where no such things are found, one must suffer insupportable tediousness. This is indeed the case with those who have a conscience defiled by sin. As long as they are occupied in the affairs of this world they do not think of the things of the soul; but when they are disengaged and in solitude where they do not seek God, they feel all at once remorse of conscience, and thus they find nothing but tediousness and pain. But in the case of one who seeks God, he will find in solitude not tediousness, but contentment and joy. Of this the Wise Man assures us: *For her* (wisdom's) *conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness*—(Wis. viii. 16). Oh no, to converse with God causes no bitterness, no tediousness; no, nothing but peace and joy.

The Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine, during the season when the other Cardinals went to pass their holidays in country seats and villas, used to go to some quiet house to make the Exercises for a month, and these he called his holiday, and certainly his heart found more delight in them than others did in their pastimes.

St. Charles Borromeo made the Exercises every year and found in them his paradise on earth; and it was while he was one year engaged in these Exercises on Mount Varalle that his last illness and death came. Hence it is that St. Jerome says that solitude was his paradise on earth : " Solitude is a paradise to me."

But, perhaps, some one will ask : What contentment can a person find, being alone and having no one with whom to converse? St. Bernard answers : " He who seeks God is by no means alone in solitude, for God Himself is there with him, and renders him happier than if he had the company of the first princes of the world." " I am never less alone," wrote the holy Abbot, " than when alone." *Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus.*

The Prophet Isaias, describing the sweetness which God gives to those who seek Him in retreat, says : *The Lord therefore will comfort Sion, and will comfort all the ruins thereof; and he will make her desert as a place of pleasure, and her wilderness as a garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of praise*—(Is. li. 3).

The Lord well knows how to comfort a soul that withdraws from the world. He compensates a thousandfold for the loss of all the pleasures of the world. He changes solitude into a garden of delights, where the tumult of the world being excluded, the soul thanks and praises God, and finds a very paradise of peace.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity beareth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

Oh, what abundance of merits may be accumulated by patiently enduring an illness! Almighty God revealed to Father Balthazar Alvarez the great glory He had in store for a certain nun who had borne a painful sickness with resignation; and told him that she had acquired greater merit in those eight months of her illness than some other Religious in many years. It is by the patient endurance of ill-health that we weave a great part, and perhaps the greater part, of the crown that God destines for us in Heaven. St. Lidwina had a revelation to this effect. After sustaining many and most cruel disorders, as we mentioned, she prayed to die a martyr for the love of Jesus Christ; now, as she was one day sighing after this martyrdom, she suddenly saw a beautiful crown, but as yet incomplete, and she understood that it was destined for herself; whereupon the Saint, longing to behold it completed, entreated the Lord to increase her sufferings. Her prayer was heard, for some soldiers came shortly after and ill-treated her, not only with injurious words, but with blows and outrages. An Angel then appeared to her with the crown completed, and informed her that those last injuries had added to it the gems that were wanting; and shortly afterwards she expired.

II.

Ah, yes! to the hearts that fervently love Jesus Christ, pains and ignominies are most delightful. And thus we see the holy Martyrs going with gladness to encounter the

sharp prongs and hooks of iron, the plates of glowing steel and axes. The Martyr St. Procopius thus spoke to the tyant who tortured him : " Torment me as you like ; but know at the same time that nothing is sweeter to the lover of Jesus Christ than to suffer for His sake." St. Gordiano, Martyr, replied in the same way to the tyrant who threatened him with death : " Thou threatenest me with death ; but I am sorry that I can die only once for my own beloved Jesus." And I ask, did these Saints speak thus because they were insensible to pain or weak in intellect ? No, replies St. Bernard ; not insensibility, but love caused this : *Hoc non fecit stupor, sed amor*. They were not insensible, for they felt well enough the torments inflicted on them ; but since they loved God, they esteemed it a great privilege to suffer for God, and to lose all, even life itself, for the love of God.

Wednesday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD—THE GOODS OF THIS WORLD ARE FALSE GOODS.

The world ! And what is the world but mere show ! A scene which quickly passes away ! *The fashion of this world passeth away* ! Death approaches, the curtain falls, the scene closes, and all comes to an end !

I.

What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul ?—(Matt. xvi. 26). O great maxim, which has conducted so many souls to Heaven, and bestowed so many Saints on the Church !

What doth it profit to gain the whole world, which passes away, and lose the soul, which is eternal?

The world! And what is the world but mere show, a scene which quickly passes away! *The fashion of this world passeth away*—(1 Cor. vii. 31). Death approaches, the curtain falls, the scene closes, and thus all comes to an end!

Alas! at the hour of death, how will all worldly things appear to a Christian—those vessels of silver, those heaps of gold, that rich and vain furniture—when he must leave them all forever!

O Jesus, grant that henceforward my soul may be wholly Thine! Grant that I may love no other but Thee. I desire to renounce all things before death tears me away from them.

St. Teresa says: "Nothing ought to be considered of consequence which must come to an end." Let us, therefore, strive to gain that treasure which will not fail with time. What does it avail a man to be happy for a few days (if indeed there can be any happiness without God), if he must be unhappy forever in eternity.

David says that earthly goods, at the hour of death, will seem as a dream to one waking from sleep: *As the dream of them that awake*—(Ps. lxxii. 20). What disappointment does he feel who, having dreamt he was a king, on awaking finds himself still as lowly and poor as ever?

O my God, who knows but that this meditation which I am now reading will be the last call for me? Enable me to root out of my heart all earthly affections, before I enter into eternity. Grant that I may be sensible of the great wrong I have done Thee, by offending Thee, and by forsaking Thee for the love of creatures. *Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son*—(Luke xv. 21). I am grieved for having turned my back upon Thee; do not reject me, now that I return to Thee.

II.

No position of dignity, no magnificence, no wealth, no nice points of honour, no pastimes, will console a

Christian at the hour of death; the love of Jesus Christ, and the little that he has suffered for His love, will alone console him.

Philip II, when dying, said "Oh, that I had been a Lay-Brother in some Monastery, and not a King!" Philip III said "Oh, that I had lived in a desert! Alas, now I shall appear with but little confidence before the tribunal of God!" Thus, at the hour of death, do those express themselves who have been esteemed the most fortunate in this world.

In short, all earthly goods generally bring, at the hour of death, only remorse of conscience and fear of eternal damnation. O God! will the dying sinner say, I have had sufficient light to withdraw myself from worldliness, and yet I have followed the world, and its maxims; and now what sentence will be pronounced upon me? Fool that I have been! I might have been a saint, with the means of grace and the advantages I enjoyed! I might have led a happy life in union with God; and now what have I but remorse of conscience and a dread of damnation! But when will he say this? When the scene is about to close, and himself about to enter into eternity, and at that moment on which will depend his happiness or misery forever.

O Lord, have pity on me! For the past I have not been so wise as to love Thee. From this day forward Thou alone shalt be my only Good: *My God and my all*! Thou alone deservest all my love, and Thee only will I love.

Spiritual Reading

IV.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

If, indeed, there were no other satisfaction in solitude than that of knowing the Eternal Truths, that alone

would be sufficient to make a Retreat a most desirable thing. The knowledge of the Eternal Truths gives the soul a perfect contentment such as is never found in the vanities of the world, which are only lying and deceitful things. Herein consists precisely the happiness which is found in the exercises of a Retreat gone through in solitude and silence. It is then one sees in the clearest light the Christian maxims, the importance of salvation, the ugliness of sin, the value of grace, the love God bears us, the vanity of earthly goods, the foolishness of those who, for the sake of the fleeting joys of the world, sling away eternal goods and prepare for themselves an Eternity of pain and misery.

Hence it comes about that, having convinced himself of these truths, a man takes the most efficacious means to secure his eternal salvation. In a Retreat he disentangles himself from earthly affections and unites himself to God in prayer, by desires of closer union with Him, by repeated offerings of himself, by multiplied acts of sorrow, love, and resignation. He thus finds himself raised so high above all created things that he smiles in pity on those who set such value on the things of this world which he so much despises, knowing how worthless they are, and how unworthy of the love of a heart created to love an infinite Good, which is God. It is certain that one comes out of the Exercises a very different man, and much better than he was when he began them.

It was the opinion of St. John Chrysostom that retirement was a great means of rising to perfection. And a learned author, speaking of the Exercises of a Retreat, says: "Happy, indeed, is the man who, fleeing from the noise of the world, allows himself to be led by the Lord to the Spiritual Exercises, into that sweet solitude where he finds and tastes the delights of Paradise." Sermons in the churches are good, but if the hearers do not reflect on what they have heard, the fruit will be little. Reflection will never be made as it should be unless it be made in solitude. As soon as the oyster receives the dew of heaven it shuts itself at once and sinks to the bottom of the sea, and there the pearl is

formed. It is beyond all doubt that what makes the fruit of the Exercises perfect is the silent reflection alone with God upon the truths one has heard in a sermon or read in a book. Hence St. Vincent de Paul in his missions never failed to exhort his hearers to make the Exercises in some retired place. One single spiritual maxim well meditated upon is sufficient to make a saint. Thus St. Francis Xavier resolved to give up the world in consequence of the impression made on him by that maxim of the Gospel: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?* —(Matt. xvi. 26). A young student having once heard a maxim on death, changed his conduct and led a virtuous life. St. Clement of Ancyra was encouraged to suffer for Jesus Christ all the torments inflicted by the tyrant, by thinking of what his mother had taught him: "It is for life eternal we are fighting."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

Above all, in time of sickness we should be ready to accept of death, and of that death which God pleases. We must die, and our life must finish in our last illness; but we do not know which will be our last illness. Wherefore in every illness we must be prepared to accept that death God has appointed for us. A sick person says: "Yes; but I have committed many sins, and have done no penance. I should like to live, not for the sake of living, but to make some satisfaction to God before I die." But tell me, how do you know that if you live

nger you will do penance, and not rather do worse than efore? At present you can well cherish the hope that od has pardoned you, and what penance can be more atisfactory than to accept of death with resignation, if od wills you are to die? St. Aloysius Gonzaga, at the ge of twenty-three, gladly embraced death with this eflection: "At present," he said, "I am, as I hope, in he grace of God. Hereafter I know not what may efall me; so that I now die contentedly, if God calls ne to the next life." It was the opinion of Blessed ohn of Avila that every one, provided he be in proper lispositions, though only moderately good, should desire leath, to escape the danger which always surrounds us n this world, of sinning and losing the grace of God.

Besides, owing to our natural frailty, we cannot live n this world without committing at least venial sins; his should be a motive for us to embrace death willingly hat we may never offend God any more. Further, if ve truly love God, we should ardently long to go to see Him, and love Him with all our strength in Paradise, which no one can do perfectly in this present life; but unless death open to us the door, we cannot enter that blessed region of love. This caused St. Augustine, that loving soul, to cry out: "Oh, let me die, Lord, that I may behold Thee!" O Lord, let me die, otherwise I cannot behold and love Thee face to face.

II.

In the second place we must practise patience in the endurance of poverty. Our patience is certainly very much tried when we are in need of temporal goods. St. Augustine says: "He that has not God, has nothing; he that has God, has all." He who possesses God, and remains united to His will, finds every good. Witness St. Francis, barefooted, clad in sack-cloth, and deprived of all things, yet happier than all the monarchs of the world, by simply repeating: *Deus meus et omnia*! My God and my All! He only is a poor man who has not what he desires; but he that desires nothing, and is contented with his poverty, is in fact very rich. Of such

St. Paul says : *Having nothing, yet possessing all things* —(2 Cor. vi. 10). The true lovers of God have nothing, and yet have every thing; since, when temporal goods fail them, they exclaim : " My Jesus, Thou alone art sufficient for me !" and with this they rest satisfied. Not only did the Saints maintain patience in poverty, but sought to be despoiled of all, in order to live detached from all, and united with God alone. If we have not courage to renounce all worldly goods, at all events let us be contented with that state of life in which God has placed us; let our solicitude be not for earthly goods, but for those of Paradise, which are immeasurably greater, and last for ever; and let us be fully persuaded of the truth of what St. Teresa says : " The less we have here the more we shall have in Heaven."

Thursday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD—THE GOODS OF THIS WORLD PASS QUICKLY.

Ye great ones of the world who are tormented in the fires of hell, what remains to you now of your honours and your wealth? They answer, weeping : Nothing ! Nothing ! *What advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow!*

I.

Ye great ones of the world, who are now tormented in the fires of hell, what remains to you now of your honours and riches? They answer, weeping : Nothing ! nothing !

We have nothing but torments and despair! All is passed but our punishment, which will never end!

At death men will say: *What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow*—(Wis. v. 8). Alas! the remembrance of the good things we have enjoyed in the world will not, at the hour of death, inspire us with confidence, but will fill us with terror and confusion.

Woe to me! How many years have I been in the world, and what have I hitherto done for God? O Lord, have pity on me, and *cast me not away from thy face*—(Ps. l. 13).

The time of death is the time when all worldly things will appear as they really are—vanity, smoke, and dust!

O my God! How frequently have I exchanged Thee for a nothing! I should not dare to hope for pardon, were it not that Thou hast died in order to pardon me. Now will I love Thee above all things, and will esteem Thy grace more precious than all the kingdoms of the earth.

Death is compared by St. Paul to *a thief*—(1 Thess. v. 4), because it robs us of all things—possessions, relations, beauty, dignity, and even of our own very flesh.

The day of death is also called *the day of destruction*—(Deut. xxxii. 35). Then shall we lose all that we have ever acquired, and all that we can hope for from this world. O my Jesus! I am not concerned about the loss of earthly goods, but only lest I should lose Thee, the Infinite Good.

We extol the Saints, who, for the love of Jesus Christ, despise the goods of this earth; and do we continue to be attached to such vanities at the imminent danger of our salvation?

We have a great esteem for the treasures of this life; and why do we make so little account of the treasures of eternity?

Enlighten me, O my God! Make me realize that all creatures are nothing, and that Thou art my All, the Infinite Good. Grant that I may leave all things to

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE

possess Thee alone. My God! My God! Thee only do I desire, and besides Thee, nothing in this world!

II.

St. Teresa says that our faults and our attachments to the goods of this earth, arise from a want of Faith. Let us then reanimate our Faith, and remember we shall one day have to leave all and go into eternity. And hence let us leave all now, while we can obtain merit by so doing. One day we shall have to leave them all. What are riches, honours, friends? God! God! Let us seek God alone, and God will be our All.

That eminent servant of God, Sister Margaret of St. Ann, daughter of the Emperor Rudolf II, and a discalced Religious used to say: "What will kingdoms avail at the hour of death?"

The death of the Empress Isabella induced St. Francis Borgia to renounce the world, and to give himself entirely to God. At the sight of her corpse he said to himself: It is thus, then, that the grandeurs and the crowns of this world terminate!

O my God, Thou hast always loved me! Grant that I may be wholly Thine before death overtakes me.

Spiritual Reading

V.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

In order to form a true idea of the good produced by a Retreat, read some book on the subject, and see the wonderful conversions brought about by the Exercises. I will mention a few.

Father Maffei tells us there was in Sienna a priest who led a disedifying life. He made a Retreat under the direction of a missionary who happened to be in that town; and not only was he converted, but one day when

here was a great multitude in the Church, he went into the pulpit weeping and with a rope round his neck, and there asked pardon for all the scandal he had given. He afterwards became a Capuchin and died a Saint. On his death-bed he made known that all the great graces he had received were due to the Spiritual Exercises.

Father Bartoli relates that a certain German knight, who, having abandoned himself to all kinds of vice, gave his soul to the devil by a document signed in his own blood. He afterwards performed the Spiritual Exercises, and he conceived so great a sorrow for his sins, that he often fainted from excess of grief. He thenceforth led a life of severe penance till the day of his death.

Father Rossignoli tells us that in Sicily a certain baron's son led so debauched a life that, having tried all means to make him amend, but in vain, his father was obliged to put him in a galley to work with the slaves. But a certain good Religious, moved to compassion, sought out the young man, and by his kind winning manners, induced him to meditate whilst at his work on the great Truths of Eternity. This he did, and soon he made his confession, and so changed his life that his father was glad to receive him back to his house again, and never again had any reason to be displeased with his son.

A young man in Flanders, having made a Spiritual Retreat, gave up his wicked life. Seeing his friends amazed at his conversion, he said to them : " You wonder at my change of life, but I tell you that if the devil himself were capable of making the Spiritual Exercises, he would be converted to penance."

A Religious who had by his bad conduct become insupportable in his Community, was sent by his Superiors to make a Retreat. When he was going away he jestingly said to those about him : " Get ready your Rosary beads to touch me when I return." But the Exercises did indeed change him so completely that he became an example for all the other Religious, and, seeing the change, they all wished to make the Exercises.

Some young men, seeing a number of their friends going to make a Spiritual Retreat, wished to accompany them, not to profit their souls, but in order afterwards to jest about the Exercises. Just the opposite happended; for during the Retreat they were so filled with compunction that they began to sigh and weep for their sins. They made good Confessions and changed their lives.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity beareth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY, AND CONTEMPT.

I.

St. Bonaventure said that temporal goods were nothing more than a sort of bird-lime to hinder the soul from flying to God. And St. John Climacus said that poverty, on the contrary, is a path which leads to God free of all hindrances. Our Lord Himself said: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* —(Matt. v. 3). In the other Beatitudes, the Heaven of the life to come is promised to the meek and to the clean of heart; but to the poor, Heaven (that is heavenly joy) is promised even in this life: *theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Yes, for even in the present life the poor enjoy a foretaste of Paradise. By the poor in spirit are meant those who are not merely poor in earthly goods, but who do not so much as desire them; who, having enough to clothe and feed them, live contented, according to the advice of the Apostle: *But having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content*

—(1 Tim. vi. 8). Oh, blessed poverty, exclaimed St. Laurence Justinian, which possesses nothing and fears nothing! Ever joyous and ever in abundance, since she turns every inconvenience into advantage for the soul. St. Bernard said: "The avaricious man hungers after earthly things as a beggar, the poor man despises them as a lord." The miser is always hungry as a beggar, because he is never satiated with possessing; the poor man, on the contrary, despises them all as a rich lord, inasmuch as he desires nothing.

II.

One day Jesus Christ thus spoke to St. Angela of Foligno: "If poverty were not of great excellence, I would not have chosen it for Myself, nor have bequeathed it to My Elect." And, in fact, the Saints, seeing Jesus poor, had therefore a great affection for poverty. St. Paul says that the desire of growing rich is a snare of Satan by which he has wrought the ruin of innumerable souls: *They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition*—(1 Tim. vi. 9). Unhappy beings who, for the sake of vile creatures of earth, forfeit an Infinite Good, which is God! St. Basil the Martyr was right, when the Emperor Licinius proposed to make him the chief among his priests, if he would renounce Jesus Christ; he was right, I say, to reply: "Tell the emperor that were he to give me his whole kingdom, he would not give me as much as he would rob me of by depriving me of God." Let us be content, then, with God, and with the things He gives us, rejoicing in our poverty, when we stand in need of something we desire, and have it not; for herein consists our merit. "Not poverty," says St. Bernard, "but the love of poverty, is reckoned a virtue." Many are poor, but from not loving their poverty, they merit nothing; therefore St. Bernard says that the virtue of poverty consists not in being poor, but in the love of poverty.

Friday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.—DEATH SHOWS US THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.

St. John Chrysostom says : "Go to the tomb, and contemplate the dust and worms and—sigh!" O the great secret of death! Things the most desirable on this earth lose all their splendour when viewed from the bed of death.

I.

O the great secret of death! How it brings to an end all worldly desires! How it shows all worldly grandeur as smoke and deceit! Things the most desired of this earth lose all their splendour when beheld from the bed of death. The shadow of death obscures the beauty of all things here below.

Of what profit are riches when nothing remains but a winding-sheet? Of what advantage bodily beauty, when all is reduced to a heap of worms? Of what avail is authority, when nothing remains but to be thrown into the grave, and be forgotten by all?

St. Chrysostom says : " Go to a sepulchre, contemplate dust and worms—and sigh!" Look on the graves of the dead; see those skeletons gnawed by worms and crumbling into dust, and say, with a sigh : Ah, such must I become, and why do I not think of this? Why do I not give myself to God? Alas! who knows but that which I am now reading may be the last call for me?

O my dear Redeemer, I accept of my death, and I accept of it in whatever way it may please Thee to send

it to me; but I beseech Thee, before Thou judgest me, to allow me time to bewail the offences I have committed against Thee. I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I am truly sorry for having despised Thee.

O my God, how many miserable beings, to obtain worldly goods, pleasures, vanities, have lost their souls, and, by losing their souls, have lost all!

Do we believe or not that we must one day die? And that only once? And why do we not leave all, to secure a happy death? Let us leave all, to secure all.

Is it possible we realize that the remembrance of a disorderly life will at the hour of death be an insufferable torment, and still continue to live on in sin?

O my God, I thank Thee for the light Thou affordest me. But, O Lord, what have I done? Have I multiplied my sins, and hast Thou increased Thy graces? Woe to me, if I do not avail myself of them!

II.

He who reflects that in a short time he must leave the world will not be attached to it.

Oh, with what peace of soul do those live and die who, despoiled of all things, are contented to say, *My God and my all!*

Solomon said that all the goods of this earth are only vanity and affliction of spirit; since the more one possesses of the goods of this world, the more he suffers.

St. Philip Neri used to call those fools whose hearts are attached to this world. Fools, because even here they lead miserable lives.

O my God, what now remains of the many sinful deeds of which I have been guilty, but the pain and remorse that torment me, and will torment me still more at the hour of death? Oh, do Thou, O Lord, make haste to pardon me! Thou desirest that I should be all Thine, and such do I desire to be. Behold, from this moment, I give myself to Thee, and I desire nothing in return but Thyself.

Let us not imagine that to be detached from all things,

in order to love God alone, is to live an unhappy life. Who on this earth is so contented and happy as the man who loves Jesus Christ with his whole heart? Find me one amongst all the kings of the world, who is more happy than the man who gives himself entirely to God.

My soul, if now thou wert to depart out of this world, wouldst thou die satisfied with thy past life? And for what dost thou delay? Is it that the light which God in His mercy now affords thee may only serve to reproach thee at the great accounting day?

O Jesus, I renounce all to give myself to Thee. Thou didst seek me when I fled from Thee; and now that I seek Thee, do not reject me. Thou didst love me when I did not love Thee, nor even desire that Thou shouldst love me; and now that I have no other desire but to love Thee, and to be loved by Thee, cast me not away from Thy face. O my God, I am now convinced that Thou desirest to save me, and I desire to work out my salvation to please Thee. I leave all, and give my whole self to Thee. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading

VI.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

I could add a thousand other examples, but I shall relate only one more—the case of a nun in the Convent of Torre di Specchi in Rome. She pretended to be a learned woman, but led a very imperfect life. When the Spiritual Exercises were being conducted in the convent she began them, but very much against her will. The very first meditation on the "End of Man" made such an impression on her that, weeping, she went to the Spiritual Father, and said: "Father, I wish to become a saint without delay." She wanted to say more, but sobs prevented her. Returning to her cell she wrote out

consecration of her entire self to Jesus Christ, and gave herself up to penance and retirement, and persevered until death.

If we had no other motive for attaching so much importance to the Spiritual Exercises, it would be enough to consider the esteem so many saintly men had for them. St. Charles Borromeo began to lead a perfect life after the first Retreat in Rome. St. Francis de Sales attributed to the Spiritual Exercises the first beginnings of a holy life. Louis of Granada, a man of very great virtue, used to say that a lifetime would not suffice to explain the knowledge of Divine things which he discovered in going through the Spiritual Exercises. Blessed John of Avila called the Exercises a school of heavenly wisdom, and exhorted all his spiritual children to make them. Father Louis Blosius, the holy Benedictine, used to say we should give God special thanks for having in these latter times made known to His Church the precious treasure of the Spiritual Exercises of a Retreat.

But if the Exercises are of great help to persons in every state and condition, they are of special help to him who wishes to make a proper choice of a state of life. For I find it laid down that the first end for which the Exercises were instituted was that of making the choice of a state of life, because upon this choice depends the eternal salvation of each one. We cannot expect that an Angel from Heaven should come to assure us of the state which, according to the will of God, we should choose. It is sufficient to put before us the state we are thinking of choosing, and then to consider the end we have in view in that choice, and weigh all the circumstances.

This is the principal reason for which I wish you to make the Exercises in silence; namely, for making the choice of the state of life.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity beareth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

This love of poverty should be especially practised by Religious who have made the Vow of Poverty. "Many Religious," says the great St. Bernard, "wish to be poor; but on the condition of wanting for nothing." "Thus," says St. Francis of Sales, "they wish for the honour of poverty, but not the inconveniences of poverty." To such persons is applicable the saying of the blessed Solomea, a nun of St. Clare: "That Religious will be a laughing-stock to Angels and to men, who pretends to be poor, and yet murmurs when in want of anything." Good Religious act differently; they love their poverty above all riches. The daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II, a discalced nun of St. Clare, called Sister Margaret of the Cross, appeared on one occasion before her brother, the Archduke Albert, in a patched habit. He evinced some astonishment at it, as if it were unbecoming her noble birth; but she made him this answer: "My brother, I am more content with this torn garment than all monarchs with their purple robes." St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said: "O happy Religious, who, detached from all by means of holy poverty, can say: 'The Lord is the portion of my inheritance!'" My God, Thou art my portion and all my good! St. Teresa, having received a large alms from a certan merchant, sent him word that his name was written in the Book of Life; and that, in token of this, he should lose all his possessions; and the merchant actually failed, and remained in poverty till death.

t. Aloysius Gonzaga said that there could be no surer ign of a person's being numbered among the elect than o see him fearing God, and at the same time undergoing rosses and tribulations in this life.

II.

The bereavement of relations and friends by death elongs also, in some measure, to holy poverty; and in his we must especially practise patience. Some people, t the loss of a parent or friend, can find no rest; they hut themselves up to weep in their chamber, and giving ree vent to their sorrow, become insupportable to all round them by their want of patience. I would ask hese persons for whose gratification, or for whose sake, lo they thus lament and shed tears? Is it for God's? Certainly not; for God's will is that they should be esigned to His dispensations. For that of the soul leparted? By no means: if the soul be lost, she abhors both you and your tears; if she be saved, and already in Heaven she would have you thank God on her part; if till in Purgatory, she craves the help of your prayers, nd wishes you to bow with resignation to the Divine will, and to become a saint, in order that she may one lay enjoy your society in Paradise. Of what use, then, s all this weeping? On one occasion the Venerable Father Joseph Caracciolo, the Theatine, was surrounded by his relations, who were all bitterly lamenting the death of his brother, whereupon he said to them: 'Come! come! let us keep these tears for a better purpose, to weep over the death of Jesus Christ, Who has been to us a Father, a Brother, a Spouse, and Who died for love of us." On such occasions we must imitate Job, who, on hearing the news of the death of his sons, exclaimed, with full resignation to the Divine will: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*; God gave me my sons, and God hath taken them away. *As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord!* It hath pleased God that such things should happen, and so it pleaseth me; wherefore may He be blessed by me for ever—(Job i. 21).

Saturday—Fifth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE MERCY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

"Oh, how many who deserved to be condemned by the justice of the Son, are saved by the mercy of the Mother! For she is God's treasure and the treasurer of all graces, and thus our salvation is in her hands and depends on her."—(Abbot of Celles).

I.

The Blessed Virgin said one day to St. Bridget: I am called, and I truly am, the Mother of Mercy; for such God has made me. And who, but God in His mercy, because He desires our salvation, has given us this advocate to defend us? "Therefore," adds Mary, "miserable will he be, who, while it is in his power, has not recourse to me, who am merciful." Miserable is the man, and miserable for eternity, who, though he could, during life, have recommended himself to me, who am so benign and merciful to all, has neglected to have recourse to me, and is lost.

Perhaps, says Bonaventure, we are afraid that in asking Mary's intercession she will refuse it to us? No, says the Saint: "Mary does not refuse, and never has refused pity and aid to any sinner who has invoked her intercession." She has not done so, and she cannot do so, because God has made her the Queen and the Mother of Mercy; and as Queen of Mercy she is bound to attend to the care of the miserable. "Thou," says St. Bernard, "art the Queen of Mercy; and who but the miserable are the subjects of mercy?" Hence the Saint through humility adds: "Since, then, O Mother of God, thou art the Queen of Mercy, thou must have a special care of me, who am the most miserable of sinners." As Mother

of Mercy it is her duty to deliver from death her sick children, to whom her mercy makes her a Mother. Hence, St. Basil calls her a public hospital. Public hospitals are erected for the poor; and they who are in the greatest poverty have the best claims to be admitted into them. Hence, according to St. Basil, Mary ought to receive with the greatest tenderness and care the greatest sinners who have recourse to her.

O great Mother of God, behold at thy feet a miserable sinner, who has not once, but several times, voluntarily lost Divine grace, which thy Son purchased for him by His death. O Mother of Mercy, I come to thee with a soul covered with wounds and sores; be not angry with me on this account, but have the greater pity on me and assist me. I do not ask of thee earthly goods; I ask thee to obtain for me the grace of God and love of thy Son.

II.

But let us not doubt of the Mercy of Mary. One day St. Bridget heard the Saviour saying to His Mother: "Thou wouldst show compassion to the devil, should he ask it with humility." The haughty Lucifer will never humble himself to ask her prayers; but if he humbled himself to this Divine Mother, and invoked her help, she, by her intercession, would deliver him from hell. By those words, Jesus Christ wished to give us to understand what Mary herself afterwards said to the same St. Bridget—that when a sinner has recourse to her, however enormous his guilt may be, she regards not the sins with which he is charged, but the intention with which he comes. If he come with a sincere desire to amend, she receives him and heals all his wounds. Hence St. Bonaventure says: "Poor sinners, do not despair! Raise your eyes to Mary, and trust in the Mercy of this good Mother." Let us, then, says St. Bernard, ask the grace we have lost, and let us ask it through Mary. The grace which we have lost, she has found, says Richard of St. Laurence; we therefore ought to go to her in order to recover it. When the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Most Holy Virgin the Divine

maternity, he said to her: *Fear not, Mary, thou hast found grace*—(Luke i. 30). But, since Mary was never deprived of grace, but was, on the contrary, always full of grace, how could he say that she had found it? In answer to this question, Cardinal Hugo says that Mary found grace, not for herself, because she had always possessed it, but for us, who have lost it. Hence the same author says that we ought to go to her and say: O Lady, property ought to be restored to him who has lost it; the grace which thou hast found is not thine, for thou hast always possessed it; it is ours, we have lost it through our own fault; thou shouldst then restore it to us. "Let sinners, then, who have lost grace by their sins, run—let them run to the Virgin, and say with confidence: Restore to us our property, which thou hast found."

My Mother Mary, pray for me, and never cease to pray for me. It is through the merits of Jesus Christ and thy intercession that I am to be saved. Thy office is to intercede for sinners: I will, then, say with St. Thomas of Villanova: "O Mary, our advocate, fulfil thy office!" Recommend me to God and defend me. No cause, however desperate, is lost, when defended by thee. Thou, after Jesus, art the hope of sinners; thou art my hope. O Mary, I will not cease to serve thee, to love thee, and to have recourse to thee always. Do not, then, ever cease to pray for me, particularly when thou seest me in danger of again losing the grace of God. O Mary, O great Mother of God, have pity on me.

Spiritual Reading

VII.—THE ADVANTAGE OF A RETREAT MADE IN SOLITUDE AND SILENCE.

When, then, you have entered upon the Retreat, as I hope you will, I beg of you to follow the advice I now give you.

1. The sole intention you should have in making these Exercises is that you may know what God will have you to do; and, therefore, in going to that silent Retreat-house, say to yourself: *I will hear what the Lord God shall speak in me*—(Ps. lxxxiv. 9). I go into Retreat to know what the Lord will tell me and what He wishes me to do.

2. Besides, it is necessary that you have a determined will to obey God and to follow without reserve the vocation He will make known to you.

3. It is, moreover, necessary that you pray earnestly to the Lord, that He may make known to you His will, no matter what the state of life He wishes you to live. But remember that in order to obtain this light you must ask it with holy indifference. He who prays to God to enlighten him on the choice of a state of life, but does so without this indifference, and, instead of wishing to conform to God's will wishes rather that God should conform to his, is like a pilot who feigns to will, but indeed wills not, that his vessel should advance, since he begins by casting anchor and then hoists the sail! God does not enlighten or speak to such a person. But if you will supplicate God with this holy indifference and the resolution to accomplish His will, He will make you see clearly the state which is best for you. And if you should then feel any repugnance, place before your eyes the hour of your death, and think of the choice you would in that hour wish to have made, and act accordingly.

4. Take with you to your house of Retreat a book containing the meditations which are commonly made during the Exercises; read these meditations, and let them take the place of sermons, reflecting on them for half an hour in the morning and in the evening. Bring also with you the Life of some Saint or some other spiritual book for your spiritual reading; and these ought to be your only companions in solitude during the eight days of your Retreat. In order to obtain light and to hear what the Lord will speak to you it is necessary to avoid every distraction: *Be still, and see that I am God*

—(Ps. xlv. 11). To hear the Divine voice, we must cease all intercourse with the world. To a sick man no remedies will be of any use if he does not take them with the proper precaution, as, for example, avoiding exposure to the cold air, unwholesome food, or too much application of mind. In like manner, in order that the Exercises may be useful for the health of your soul, you must remove hurtful distractions, such as the receiving of visits from friends, messages from without, letters, etc. When St. Francis de Sales was engaged in the Exercises he laid aside all the letters he received and did not read them until after the Retreat. You must avoid books of amusement, and do no study; for you ought then only to study the Crucifix. Therefore, have in your room none but spiritual books, and read not for curiosity's sake, but only for this one end—namely, to help you to follow the state of life which God will make known to you as the one He wishes you to embrace.

5.—Moreover, it is not enough to avoid distractions from without, you must also avoid those from within; for if you should deliberately allow your mind to think on worldly matters, or of your studies, or the like, the Exercises and the solitude will be of little use to you. St. Gregory says: "What will solitude of the body avail if solitude of the heart be wanting?" Peter Ortiz, a minister of the Emperor Charles V, went to make a Retreat at the monastery of Monte Cassino. Having arrived at the gates of the monastery he addressed to his thoughts the words our Lord spoke to His disciples: *Sedete hic, donec vadam illuc et orem* —(Matt. xxvi. 36). "Worldly thoughts, stay you here outside the gates, and when I have ended my Retreat I shall return to you." When one is engaged in making the Spiritual Exercises, one should occupy the time solely for the good of one's soul without losing or wasting a single moment of it.

Finally, when you are in your Retreat, I would beg of you to use the following short prayer:—

O my God, I am that miserable one who in the past despised Thee; but now I esteem and love Thee above

everything, nor will I love any other but Thee. Thou wishest me to belong entirely to Thee; to Thee I will belong entirely. *Speak, O Lord; for thy servant heareth*—(1Kings iii. 10). Let me know what Thou wishest from me, and I will do all. Let me especially know in what particular state Thou wishest me to serve Thee: *Make thou known to me the way in which I should walk*—(Ps. cxlii. 8).

During the Exercises recommend yourself also in a special manner to the Divine Mother Mary, praying her to obtain for you the grace to accomplish perfectly the will of her Son.

And do not forget, when you make the Exercises, to recommend me to Jesus Christ, as I will not omit to do so in a particular manner for you, that He may make you a saint, as I wish with all my heart. Your most devoted and obliged servant,

ALPHONSUS MARY,
Bishop of St. Agatha.

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Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity beareth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY AND CONTEMPT.

I.

In the third place, we must practise patience, and show our love of God by tranquilly submitting to con-

tempt. As soon as a soul delivers herself up to God, He sends her from Himself, or through others, insults and persecution. One day an Angel appeared to the Blessed Henry Suso, and said to him: "Henry, thou hast hitherto mortified thyself in thy own way; henceforth thou shalt be mortified after the pleasure of others." On the day following, as he was looking from a window on the street he saw a dog shaking and tearing a rag which it held in its mouth; at the same moment a voice said to him: "So hast thou to be torn in the mouths of men." Forthwith the Blessed Henry Suso descended into the street and secured the rag, putting it by to encourage him in his coming trials.

I love Thee with my whole heart, O my dear Redeemer! I love Thee, my Sovereign Good! I love Thee, my own Love, worthy of infinite love! I am grieved at any displeasure I have ever caused Thee, more than for any evil whatever. I promise Thee to receive with patience all the trials Thou mayest send me; but I look to Thee for help to be faithful to my promise, and especially to be enabled to bear in peace the sorrows of my last agony and death.

O Mary, my Queen, vouchsafe to obtain for me a true resignation in all the anguish and trials that await me during life and at death.

II.

Affronts and injuries were the delicacies the Saints earnestly desired and sought for. St. Philip Neri, during the space of thirty years had to put up with much ill-treatment in the house of St. Jerome at Rome; but on this very account he refused to leave it, and resisted all the invitations of his sons to come and live with them in the new Oratory, founded by himself, till he received an express command from the Pope to do so. St. John of the Cross was prescribed change of air for an illness which eventually carried him to the grave. Now, he could have selected a more commodious convent, the prior of which was particularly attached to him; but he

chose instead a poor convent, whose superior was unfriendly, and who, in fact, for a long time, and almost up to his dying day, spoke ill of him, and abused him in many ways, and even prohibited the others from visiting him. Here we see how the Saints even sought to be despised. St. Teresa wrote this admirable maxim: "Whoever aspires to perfection must beware of ever saying: *They had no reason to treat me so.* If you will not bear any cross but one which is founded on reason, then perfection is not for you." Whilst St. Peter Martyr was complaining in prison of being confined unjustly he received that celebrated answer from the Crucifix; our Lord said to him: "And what evil have I done that I suffer and die on this Cross for men?" Oh, what consolation do the Saints derive in all their tribulations from the ignominies Jesus endured! St. Eleazar, on being asked by his wife how he contrived to bear with so much patience the many injuries he had to sustain, and that even from his own servants, replied: "I turn my eyes on the outraged Jesus, and I discover immediately that my affronts are a mere nothing in comparison with what He suffered for my sake; and thus God gives me strength to support all patiently." In fine, affronts, poverty, torments, and tribulations serve only to estrange further from God the soul that does not love Him; whereas, when they befall a soul in love with God they become an instrument of closer union and more ardent affection: *Many waters cannot quench charity* —(Cant. viii. 7). However great and grievous troubles may be, so far from extinguishing the flames of charity, they only serve to enkindle them the more in a soul that loves nothing else but God.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR JOURNEY INTO ETERNITY.—WE ARE ONLY PILGRIMS ON THIS EARTH.

We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come. In this world we are not citizens, but pilgrims, for we are on our way to Eternity. *Man shall go into the house of his eternity.*

I.

We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come—(Heb. xiii. 14). In this world we are not citizens, but pilgrims, for we are on our way to Eternity: *Man shall go into the house of his eternity*—(Eccles. xii. 5).

Very soon, therefore, we shall have to leave this world, The body must soon go into the grave, and the soul into Eternity.

Would not that traveller be guilty of great folly, who should waste his time and his wealth in building himself a dwelling in a place he must soon leave?

O my God, my soul is eternal; I must, then, either enjoy Thee or lose Thee for Eternity.

In Eternity there are two places of abode—one overflowing with every delight, the other replete with every torment. And these delights and torments will be eternal. *If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall there shall it be*—(Eccles. xi. 3). If the soul be saved, it will be happy forever; but if it fall into hell, it will remain there to weep and lament as long as God shall be God.

There is no middle state: either a king forever in Heaven, or forever a slave of Lucifer; either blessed forever in Paradise, or in despair forever in hell.

Which of these abodes will fall to the lot of each of us? That which each one voluntarily chooses. *Man shall go—Ibit homo.* He who goes to hell, goes of his own free will. Every one that is damned, is damned because he wills his own damnation.

O my Jesus, would that I had always loved Thee! Too late have I known Thee! too late have I loved Thee! O Thou, *the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever!*—(Ps. lxxii. 26).

II.

Every Christian, in order to live well, should always keep Eternity before his eyes. Oh, how well regulated is the life of that man who lives and sees all things in the light of Eternity!

If Heaven, Hell, and Eternity were even only doubtful things, surely we ought to do all in our power not to run the risk of being lost forever. But no; they are not doubtful things, but Articles of Faith.

To what will all the greatness of this world come? To a funeral; to a descent into the grave. Blessed in that hour is he who obtains eternal life!

O Jesus! Thou art my life, my riches, my love. Grant me a great desire to please Thee during the remainder of my life; and give me Thy assistance to fulfil it.

The thought of Eternity is sufficient to make a saint. St. Augustine called it the *Great Thought.* It is this thought that has sent so many young persons into cloisters, so many anchorites into deserts, and so many Martyrs to cruel deaths.

Father John of Avila converted a lady who was attached to the world, by only saying: "Consider: *Always* and *Forever!*"

Oh, how much depends on the last moment of our lives! On our last breath depends an Eternity, either of happiness or of misery; a life of eternal bliss, or of

eternal woe. Jesus Christ died upon the Cross, in order to secure for us His grace at this last moment.

My dear Redeemer, if then Thou hadst not died for me, I should have been lost forever! I thank Thee, O my Love! I confide in Thee and I love Thee!

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, THE GREAT MEANS OF SALVATION.

I have published several spiritual works The *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, *The Passion of Jesus Christ*, *The Glories of Mary*, and, besides, a work against the Materialists and Deists, with other devout little treatises. I have recently brought out a work on the Infancy of our Saviour entitled *Novena for Christmas*; and another entitled *Preparation for Death*, besides the one on the *Eternal Maxims*, most useful for meditation and sermons . . . But I do not think that I have written a more useful work than the present, in which I speak of prayer as a necessary, and a certain means of obtaining salvation, and all the graces which we require for that object. If it were in my power, I would distribute a copy of it to every Catholic in the world, in order to show him the absolute necessity of prayer for salvation.

I say this, because on the one hand I see that the absolute necessity of prayer is taught throughout the Holy Scriptures, and by all the Holy Fathers of the Church, while, on the other hand, I see that Christians are very careless in their practice of this great means of salvation. And, sadder still, I see that preachers take very little care to speak of it to their flocks, or confessors to their penitents; I see, moreover, that even the spiritual books now popular do not speak sufficiently of it; yet there is nothing which preachers, and confessors, and spiritual books should insist upon with more warmth

and energy than prayer; not but that they teach many excellent means of keeping ourselves in the grace of God, such as avoiding the occasions of sin, frequenting the Sacraments, resisting temptations, hearing the Word of God, meditation on the Eternal Truths, and other means—all of them, I admit, most useful; but, I say, what profit is there in sermons, meditations, and all the other means pointed out by masters of the spiritual life, if we forget to pray? Has not our Lord declared that He will grant His graces to no one who does not pray? *Ask and ye shall receive.* Without prayer, in the ordinary course of providence, all the meditations we make, all our resolutions, all our promises, will come to naught. If we do not pray, we shall be always unfaithful to the inspirations of God, and to the promises we make Him. Because, in order actually to do good, to conquer temptations, to practise virtues, and to observe God's law, it is not enough to receive illumination from God, and to meditate and make resolutions, but we require, moreover, the actual assistance of God; and, as we shall see, He does not give this assistance except to those who pray, and pray with perseverance. The light we receive, and the considerations and good resolutions we make, are of use to incite us to the act of prayer when we are in danger and are tempted to transgress God's law; for then prayer will obtain for us God's help, and we shall be preserved from sin; but if in such moments we do not pray, we shall be lost.

My intention in thus prefacing my book is, that my readers may thank God for giving them an opportunity, by means of this little book, to receive the grace of reflecting more deeply on the importance of prayer; for all adults who are saved, are ordinarily saved by this single means of grace. And therefore I ask my readers to thank God; for surely it is a great mercy when He gives the light and the grace to pray. I hope, then, that you, my beloved brother, after reading this little work, will never from this day forward, neglect to have continual recourse to God in prayer, whenever you are

tempted to offend Him. If ever in times past you have had your conscience burdened with many sins, know that the cause of this has been your neglect of prayer, your not asking God for help to resist the temptations which assailed you. I pray you, therefore, to read my words again and again with the greatest attention; not because I write them, but because this book is a means which God offers you for the good of your salvation, thereby giving you to understand that He wishes you to be saved. And after having read it yourself, induce as many of your friends and neighbours as you can to read it also. Now let us begin in the Name of the Lord.

The Apostle writes to Timothy : *I desire, therefore, first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made*—(1 Tim ii. 1). St. Thomas explains that prayer is properly the lifting up of the soul to God. *Petition* is that particular kind of prayer which begs for determinate objects, but when the thing sought is indeterminate (as when we say, " Incline unto my aid, O God !"), it is called *supplication*. *Obsecration* is a solemn adjuration or representation of the grounds on which we dare to ask a favour; as when we say," By Thy Cross and Passion, O Lord, deliver us !" Finally, *thanksgiving* is the returning of thanks for benefits received, whereby, says St. Thomas, we merit to receive greater favours. Prayer, in a strict sense, says the holy Doctor, means recourse to God; but in its general signification it includes all the kinds just enumerated. It is in this latter sense that the word is used in this book.

We will here treat :

1.—Of the Necessity of Prayer; the Power of Prayer, and the Conditions of Prayer;

2.—We will show that God gives the grace of Prayer to all men.*

* Only a part, but we think the most important part, of St. Alphonsus' Treatise on Prayer will be given here. The entire Treatise is included in Vol III. Centenary Edition of the Saint's works, which may be obtained from Editor of present work.—Ed.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity beareth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BEARS ALL THINGS FOR HIM, AND ESPECIALLY ILLNESS, POVERTY, AND CONTEMPT.

I.

But wherefore does Almighty God load us with so many crosses, and take pleasure in seeing us afflicted, reviled, persecuted, and ill-treated by the world? Is He perchance, a tyrant, whose cruel disposition makes Him rejoice in our suffering? No; God is by no means a tyrant, nor cruel; He is all compassion and love towards us; suffice it to say that He has died for us. He indeed does rejoice at our suffering, because suffering is for our good; inasmuch as by suffering here we are released hereafter from the debt of punishment justly due from us to His Divine justice; He rejoices in our sufferings because they detach us from the sensual pleasures of this world: when a mother would wean her child she puts gall on the breast in order to create a dislike in the child; He rejoices in sufferings because we give Him, by our patience and resignation in bearing them, a token of our love; in fine, He rejoices in them, because they contribute to our increase of glory in Heaven. Such are the reasons for which the Almighty, in His compassion and love towards us, is pleased when we suffer.

I love Thee with my whole heart, O my Redeemer! I love Thee, my sovereign Good! I love Thee, my own Love, worthy of infinite love. I am grieved at any displeasure I have ever caused Thee, more than for any evil whatever. I promise Thee to receive with patience all the trials Thou mayest send me; but I look to Thee

for help to be faithful to my promise, and especially to be enabled to bear in peace the sorrows of my last agony and death.

II.

Let us conclude. That we may be able to practise patience to advantage in all our tribulations, we must be fully persuaded that every trial comes from the hands of God, either directly, or indirectly through men; we must therefore render God thanks whenever we are beset with sorrows, and accept, with gladness of heart, of every event, prosperous or adverse, that proceeds from Him, knowing that all happens by His disposition and for our welfare: *To them that love God all things work together unto good*—(Rom. viii. 28). In addition to this, it is well in our tribulations to glance a moment at that hell we formerly deserved: for assuredly all the pains of this life are incomparably less than the awful pains of hell. But above all, prayer, by which we gain the Divine assistance, is the great means by which we may suffer patiently all affliction, scorn, and contradictions, and is that which will furnish us with the strength we have not of ourselves. The Saints were persuaded of this; they recommended themselves to God, and so overcame every kind of torments and persecutions.

O Lord, I am fully persuaded that without suffering, and suffering with patience, I cannot win the crown of Paradise. David said: *From him is my patience*—(Ps. lxi. 6). And I say the same; my patience in suffering must come from Thee. I make many resolutions to accept all tribulations in peace; but no sooner are trials at hand than I grow sad and alarmed; and if I suffer, I suffer without merit and without love, because I know not how to suffer them so as to please Thee. O my Jesus, through the merits of Thy patience in bearing so many afflictions for love of me, grant me the grace to bear crosses for the love of Thee!

O Mary, my Queen, vouchsafe to obtain for me a true resignation in all the anguish and trials that await me during life and at death.

Monday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR JOURNEY INTO ETERNITY.—THE FOLLY OF THOSE WHO DO NOT CONSIDER IT.

O my God, the months and years pass! We are hastening towards Eternity and we do not concern ourselves to think about it! And who knows but this may be the last warning I may receive from God!

I.

Either we believe or we do not believe. If we do not believe, we are doing too much for things we regard as fables. But if we do believe, then we do too little to obtain a happy Eternity, and to avoid eternal misery.

Father Vincent Carafa said that if men thoroughly knew the Truths of Eternity, and compared the goods and evils of this life with those of the next, the earth would become a desert, because there would be none at all who would attend to the affairs of this world.

When the last moment is near at hand, how we shall tremble at the thought that on that moment will depend our eternal happiness or misery!

O my God, the months and years pass! We are hastening towards eternity, and we do not concern ourselves to think about it! And who knows but that this year or month may be my last? Who knows but that this may be the last warning I may receive from God?

O my God, I will no longer abuse Thy graces! Behold, I am ready! Make known to me what Thou wouldst have me do, and in all things I will obey Thee.

And why should we delay after so many lights and calls from God, unless we desire to lament with the damned, saying: *The summer is ended, and we are not*

saved—(Jer. viii. 20). Now is the time for reconciliation with God, for after death no remedy will be left.

With good reason did Father John of Avila say that Christians who believe eternal life, and live at a distance from God, ought to be shut up in an asylum as insane.

The business of Eternity is indeed important. It is not whether we shall inhabit a house more or less commodious or lightsome; but whether we shall dwell in a palace of all delights, or in an abyss of the most terrible torments. It is whether we shall be happy with the Saints and Angels, or live in despair with the multitude of the enemies of God. And for how many years? For a thousand? No; forever, forever, as long as God shall be God.

If, then, O God, I had died in my sins, should I not have lost Thee forever? If as yet, O Lord, Thou hast not pardoned me, pardon me now, I beseech Thee. I love Thee with all my soul, and I am sorry above every other evil for having offended Thee. I will never lose Thee more. I love Thee with all my heart, and will forever love Thee. Have pity on me.

II.

There are many upon whom, during life, it makes little impression to hear of Judgment, Hell, Eternity. But in death what dread and terror do these Truths excite! But, alas! with but little fruit; because then they serve only to increase their remorse and confusion.

St. Teresa used to say to her Religious: "Daughters, one soul, one Eternity!" By which she meant that if the soul is lost, all is lost, and that the soul once lost, is lost forever.

O Lord, wait yet awhile, that I may weep for my sins. Too many years have I spent in displeasing Thee! The time which yet remains to me shall be given all to Thee. Accept of me, that I may serve Thee, O my God, my God!

The Lord waits for us; let us highly prize the time which, in His mercy, He bestows upon us, that we may not have to lament when for us time shall be no more.

O God, what would not a dying man give for another day, or even another hour! Another day or hour in his sound senses! Alas, the time which remains to the dying man is but little adapted to the settling of the affairs of conscience. Giddiness of head, pains of body, oppressions at the chest, hinder the mind from doing anything in a proper manner. Then the soul, as it were, buried in obscurity, is alive to nothing but the distress which overpowers it, and which it cannot alleviate. It longs to have a little time, but sees that there is no more time for it.

At what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come —(Luke xii. 40). God conceals from us the time of death, that we may always be ready. The time of death is not the time to *prepare ourselves* to give an account of our souls, but the time when we should find *ourselves prepared* to do so. St. Bernard said: "In order to die well, we must be ever prepared to die."

O Jesus, too long have I offended Thee! It is surely now time to resolve henceforth to prepare for death. I will no longer abuse Thy patience. I desire to love Thee with all my power. I have very much offended Thee; I desire now to love Thee very much.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

I.—IT IS A MEANS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.

One of the errors of Pelagianism was the assertion that *Prayer is not necessary for salvation.* Pelagius, the impious author of that heresy, said that man will only be damned for neglecting to know the truths necessary to be learned. How astonishing! St. Augustine said: "Pelagius discussed everything except how to pray," though, as the Saint held and taught,—Prayer is the

only means of acquiring the science of the Saints, according to the words of St. James : *If any man want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not*—(James i. 5).

The Scriptures are clear enough in pointing out how necessary it is to pray, if we would be saved. *We ought always to pray, and not to faint*—(Luke xviii. 1). *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*—(Matt. xxvi. 41). *Ask, and it shall be given you*—(Matt. vii. 7). The words *we ought, pray, ask*, according to the general consent of Theologians, impose the precept, and denote the *Necessity of Prayer*. Wickliffe said that these texts are to be understood, not of the necessity of Prayer, but of the *necessity of good works*, for in his system Prayer was only *well-doing*; but this was his error, and was expressly condemned by the Church. Hence Lessius wrote that it is heresy to deny that Prayer is necessary for salvation in adults, as it is evident from Scripture that Prayer is the means, without which we cannot obtain the help necessary for salvation.

The reason of this is clear. Without the assistance of God's grace we can do no good work : *Without me, ye can do nothing*—(John xv. 5). St. Augustine remarks on this passage that our Lord did not say : " Without Me, *ye can complete nothing*," but, " Without Me, *ye can do nothing*" ; giving us to understand, that without grace we cannot even *begin to do* a good work. Nay more, St. Paul writes, that of ourselves we cannot even have the wish to do good. *Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves . . . but our sufficiency is from God*—(2 Cor. iii. 5). If we cannot even think a good thought, much less can we wish to carry it out. The same thing is taught in many other passages of Scripture : *God worketh all in all*—(1 Cor. xii. 6). *I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and to keep my judgments, and do them*—(Ezech. xxxvi. 27). So that, as St. Leo I. says : " Man does no good thing, except that which God, by His grace, enables him to do" ; and hence the Council of Trent says : " If any one shall assert that without the previous inspiration of the

Holy Ghost, and His assistance, man can believe, hope, love, or repent, as he ought, in order to obtain the grace of justification, let him be anathema."

The author of the *Opus Imperfectum* says that God has given to some animals swiftness, to others claws, to others wings, for the preservation of their life; but He has so formed man that God Himself is his only strength. So that man is absolutely unable to provide for his own safety, since God has willed that whatever he has, or can have, should come entirely from the assistance of His grace.

But this grace is not given in God's ordinary Providence, except to those who pray for it; according to the celebrated saying of Gennadius, "We believe that no one comes to be saved, except at the invitation of God; that no one who is invited works out his salvation, except by the help of God; that no one merits this help, unless he prays." From these two premises, first, that *we can do nothing without the assistance of grace;* and secondly, that *this assistance is only given ordinarily by God to the man that prays*—who does not see that the consequence follows, that *prayer is absolutely necessary to us for salvation?* And although the first graces that come to us without any co-operation on our part, such as the call to Faith or to penance, are, as St. Augustine says, granted by God even to those who do not pray; yet the Saint considers it certain that the other graces, and specially the grace of perseverance, are not granted except in answer to Prayer: "God gives us some things, as the beginning of Faith, even when we do not pray. Other things, such as perseverance, He has only provided for those who pray."

Hence it is that the generality of Theologians, following St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, St. Augustine, and other Fathers, teach that Prayer is necessary to adults, not only because of the obligation of the precept, as we have seen, but because Prayer *is necessary as a means of salvation.* That is to say, in the ordinary course of Providence, it is impossible that a Christian should be saved without recommending him-

self to God, and asking for the graces necessary for salvation. St. Thomas teaches the same: "After Baptism, continual Prayer is necessary for man, in order that he may enter Heaven; for though by Baptism our sins are remitted, there still remain concupiscence to assail us from within, and the world and the devil to assail us from without." The reason, then, which makes us certain of the necessity of Prayer is briefly this: In order to be saved we must fight and conquer: *He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully*—(2 Tim. ii. 5). But without the Divine assistance we cannot resist the might of so many and such powerful enemies; now this assistance is granted only to Prayer; therefore, without Prayer there is no salvation.

Moreover, that Prayer is the only ordinary means of receiving the Divine gift, is very distinctly proved by St. Thomas in another place, where he says that whatever graces God has from all eternity determined to give us, He will only give them if we pray for them. St. Gregory says the same thing: "Man by Prayer merits to receive that which God had from all eternity determined to give him." Not, says St. Thomas, that Prayer is necessary in order that God may know our necessities, but in order that we may know the necessity of having recourse to God to obtain the help necessary for our salvation, and may thus acknowledge Him to be the Author of all our good. As, therefore, it is God's law that we should provide ourselves with bread by sowing corn, and wine by planting vines, so has He ordained that we should receive the graces necessary to salvation by means of Prayer: *Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find*—(Matt. vii. 7).

We, in a word, are merely beggars, who have nothing but what God bestows on us as alms: *But I am a beggar and poor*—(Ps. xxxix. 18). The Lord, says St. Augustine, desires and wills to pour forth His graces upon us, but does not give them except to him who prays. "God wishes to give, but only to him who asks." This is declared in the words, *Ask, and it shall*

be given to you. Whence it follows, says St. Teresa, that he who seeks not, does not receive. As moisture is necessary for the life of plants, to prevent them from drying up, so, says St. Chrysostom, is Prayer necessary for our salvation. Or, as he says in another place, Prayer vivifies the soul as the soul vivifies the body: "As the body without the soul cannot live, so the soul without Prayer is dead and emits an offensive odour." "*Graviter olens.*" He uses these words because the man who omits to recommend himself to God at once begins to be defiled with sins. Prayer is also called the food of the soul, because the body cannot be supported without food; nor can the soul, says St. Augustine, be kept alive without Prayer: "As the flesh is nourished by food, so is man supported by prayers" All these comparisons used by the holy Fathers are intended by them to teach *the absolute necessity of Prayer for the salvation of every one.*

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity believeth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BELIEVES ALL HIS WORDS.

I.

Whoever loves a person believes all that proceeds from the lips of that person; consequently, the more a soul loves Jesus Christ, the more lively and unshaken is her Faith. When the Good Thief beheld our Redeemer, though He had done no ill, suffering death upon the Cross with such patience, he began at once to love Him; under the influence of this love, and of the Divine light which then broke upon his soul, he believed that Jesus was truly the Son of God, and begged not to be forgotten by Him when He should have passed into His Kingdom.

Faith is the foundation of Charity; but Faith afterwards receives its perfection from Charity. His Faith is most perfect whose love of God is most perfect. Charity produces in man not merely the Faith of the understanding, but the Faith of the will also; those who believe only with the understanding, but not with the will, as is the case with sinners who are perfectly convinced of the Truths of the Faith, but do not choose to live according to the Divine Commandments—such as these have a very weak Faith; for had they a more lively belief that the grace of God is a priceless treasure, and that sin, because it robs us of this grace, is the worst of evils, they would assuredly change their lives. If, then, they prefer the miserable creatures of this earth to God, it is because they either do not believe or because their Faith is very weak. On the contrary, he who believes not only with the understanding but also with the will, so that he not only believes in God but has the will to believe in Him, the Revealer of truth, from the love he has for Him, and rejoices in so believing—such a one has a perfect Faith, and consequently seeks to make his life conformable to the truths he believes.

II.

Weakness of Faith, however, in those who live in sin, does not spring from the obscurity of Faith; for though God, in order to make our Faith more meritorious, has veiled the objects of Faith in darkness and secrecy, He has at the same time given us so clear and convincing evidence of their truth, that not to believe them would argue not merely a lack of sense, but sheer madness and impiety. The weakness of the Faith of many persons is to be traced to their wickedness of living. He who, rather than forego the enjoyment of forbidden pleasures, scorns the Divine friendship, would wish there was no law to forbid, and no chastisement to punish, his sin. On this account he strives to blind himself to the eternal truths of Death, Judgment, and Hell, and of Divine justice; and because such subjects strike too much terror

into his heart, and are too apt to mix bitterness in his cup of pleasure, he sets his brain to work to discover proofs, which have at least the look of plausibility; and by which he allows himself to be flattered into the persuasion that there is no soul, no God, no hell, in order that he may live and die like the brute beast, without law and without reason.

Tuesday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR JOURNEY INTO ETERNITY.—LET US PROFIT BY THE TIME THAT IS GIVEN US.

Walk, says our Divine Lord, *while you have the light*, for, *the night cometh when no man can work.* Oh, what a torment for the poor repentant sinner at the end of a careless life when there is no time left him to do all he has left undone!

I.

Oh, what a torment for the poor repentant sinner at the end of a careless life when there is no time left him to do all he left undone! St. Laurence Justinian says that worldlings, in death, would willingly give all their riches to obtain but one more hour of life. But it will be said to them: *Time shall be no more*—(Apoc. x. 6). It will be intimated to them to depart without delay: *Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world!*

St. Gregory relates that a certain Crisorius, being at the point of death, cried out to the demons: "Give me time until to-morrow." But they replied, "Fool! thou

hast had time, and why didst thou waste it? Now there is no more time for thee."

Ah, my God, how many years have I not wasted! The remainder of my time shall be entirely devoted to Thee. Grant that Thy holy love may abound in me, in whom sin has so long abounded.

St. Bernardine of Sienna said that every moment of time in this life is as precious as God; because at any moment, by an act of love or contrition, we may acquire new degrees of grace.

St. Bernard says that time is a treasure to be found only in this life. In hell, the lamentation of the damned is: "Oh, if one hour were given us!" Oh, if we had but one hour in which to escape from eternal ruin! In Heaven there is no weeping; but if the Blessed could weep, it would be at the thought of having lost so much time in which they might have acquired higher degrees of glory.

My beloved Redeemer, I do not deserve Thy pity; but Thy Passion is my hope. Help me, therefore, and stretch out Thy hand to a miserable sinner, who now desires to become wholly Thine.

And who knows but that a sudden death may surprise us, and deprive us of the time for making up our accounts? The many who have died suddenly did not expect so to die; and if they were in sin, what has become of them for all eternity?

II.

The Saints thought that they did but little, in preparing themselves during their whole lives to secure a good end. Blessed John of Avila, when it was announced to him that he was about to die, said: "Oh, that I had but a little more time to prepare myself!"

And we, why do we delay? Is it that we may make a wicked and most miserable end and leave to others an example of the Divine justice?

No, my Jesus, I will not oblige Thee to abandon me. Tell me what Thou requirest of me, and in all things I

will do Thy will. Grant that I may love Thee, and I ask for nothing more.

He hath called against me the time—(Lam. i. 15). Let us tremble, and let us not so live that God may hereafter, as judge of our ingratitude, call against us the time which, in His mercy, He now bestows upon us. *Walk*, says our Lord, *whilst you have the light*—(Jo. xii. 35). *The night cometh when no man can work*—(Jo. ix. 4).

St. Andrew Avellino trembled, saying: "Who knows whether I shall be saved or lost?" But speaking thus, he ever united himself the more closely to God. But what are we doing? How is it possible that he who believes he must die and go into Eternity should not give himself wholly to God?

My beloved Redeemer, my crucified Love, I will not wait till my death-hour to embrace Thee; from this moment I embrace Thee, I bind Thee to my heart, and leave all to love Thee alone, my only Good. O Mary, my Mother, bind me to Jesus, and obtain for me that I may never more separate myself from His love.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

II.—WITHOUT PRAYER IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST TEMPTATIONS AND TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.

Moreover, Prayer is the most necessary weapon of defence against our enemies; he who does not avail himself of it, says St. Thomas, is lost. He does not doubt that the reason of Adam's fall was because he did not recommend himself to God when he was tempted: "He sinned because he had not recourse to the Divine assistance." St. Gelasius says the same of the rebel angels: "Receiving the grace of God in vain, they could not persevere, because they did not pray." St. Charles

Borromeo, in a Pastoral letter, observes that among all the means of salvation recommended by Jesus Christ in the Gospel, the first place is given to Prayer; and He has determined that this should distinguish His Church from all false religions, when He calls her "The House of Prayer": *My house shall be called a house of prayer*—(Matt. xxi. 13). St. Charles concludes that Prayer is "the beginning and progress and the completion of all virtues." So that in darkness, distress, and danger, we have no other hope than to raise our eyes to God, and with fervent prayer to beseech His mercy to save us: *As we know not what to do*, said King Josaphat, *we can only turn our eyes to thee*—(2 Par. xx. 12). This also was David's practice, who could find no other means of safety from his enemies than continual Prayer to God to deliver him from their snares: *My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare*—(Ps. xxiv. 15). So he did nothing but pray. *Look thou upon me and have mercy on me; for I am alone and poor*—(Ps. xxiv. 15). *I cried unto thee, O Lord; save me that I may keep thy commandments* —(Ps. cxviii. 146). Lord, turn Thy eyes to me, have pity on me, and save me; for I can do nothing, and besides Thee there is none that can help me.

And, indeed, how could we ever resist our enemies and observe God's precepts especially since Adam's sin, which has rendered us so weak and infirm, unless we had Prayer as a means whereby we can obtain from God sufficient light and strength to enable us to observe them? It was a blasphemy of Luther's to say that after the sin of Adam the observance of God's law has become absolutely impossible to man. Jansenius also said that there are some precepts which are impossible even to the just, *with the power which they actually have*, and so far his proposition bears a good sense; but it was justly condemned by the Church for the addition he made to it, when he said that *they have not the grace to make the precepts possible.* It is true, says St. Augustine, that man, in consequence of his weakness, is unable to fulfil some of God's commands with his

present strength and the *ordinary grace* given to all men; but *he can easily, by Prayer, obtain such further aid as he requires for his salvation*: "God commands not impossibilities; but by commanding He suggests to you both to do what you can and to ask for what you cannot do; and He helps you, that you may be able" —"*Deus impossibilia non jubet; sed jubendo monet, et facere quod possis, et petere quod non possis; et adjuvat ut possis.*" This is a celebrated text, which was afterwards adopted and made a Dogma of Faith by the Council of Trent. The holy Doctor immediately adds: "Let us see how this is" (i.e. how man is able to do that which he cannot). "By medicine he can do that which his natural weakness renders impossible to him." That is, by Prayer we may obtain a remedy for our weakness; for when we pray, God gives us strength to do that which we cannot do of ourselves.

We cannot believe, continues St. Augustine, that God would have imposed upon us the observance of a law, and then made the law impossible. When, therefore, God shows us that of ourselves we are unable to observe all His commands it is simply to admonish us to do the easier things by means of the ordinary grace which He bestows on us, and then to do the more difficult things by means of the greater help which we can obtain by Prayer. "By the very fact that it is absurd to suppose that God could have commanded us to do impossible things, we are admonished what to do in easy matters, and what to ask for in difficulties." But why, it will be asked, has God commanded us to do things impossible by our natural strength? Precisely for this, says St. Augustine, that we may be incited to pray for help to do that which of ourselves we cannot do. "He commands some things which we cannot do, that we may know what we ought to ask of Him." And in another place: "The law was given that grace might be sought for; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled." The law cannot be kept without grace, and God has given the law with this object, that we may always ask Him for grace to observe it. In another place he says:

"The law is good, if it be used lawfully; what then, is the lawful use of the law?" He answers: "When by the law we perceive our own weakness, and ask of God the grace to heal us." St. Augustine, then, says: We ought to use the law; but for what purpose? To learn by means of the law, which we find to be above our strength, our own inability to observe it, in order that we may then obtain by prayer the divine aid to cure our weakness.

St. Bernard's teaching is the same: "Who are we, or what is our strength, that we should be able to resist so many temptations? It was certainly this that God intended, that we, seeing our deficiencies, and that we have no other help, should with all humility have recourse to His mercy." God knows how useful it is to us to be obliged to pray, in order to keep us humble, and to exercise our confidence; and He therefore permits us to be assaulted by enemies too mighty to be overcome by our own strength, that by Prayer we may obtain from His mercy aid to resist them; and it is especially to be remarked that no one can resist the impure temptations of the flesh without recommending himself to God when he is tempted. This foe is so terrible that, when he fights with us, he, as it were, takes away all light; he makes us forget all our meditations, all our good resolutions; he makes us also disregard the Truths of Faith, and even almost lose the fear of Divine punishments. For he conspires with our natural inclinations, which drive us with the greatest violence to the indulgence of sensual pleasures. He who in such a moment does not have recourse to God is lost. The only defence against this temptation is Prayer, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says: "Prayer is the bulwark of chastity"; and before him Solomon: *And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, I went to the Lord and besought him*—(Wis. viii. 21). Chastity is a virtue which we have not strength to practise, unless God gives it to us; and God does not give this strength except to him who asks for it. But whoever prays for it will certainly obtain it.

Hence St. Thomas observes (in contradiction to Jansenius), that we ought not to say that the precept of chastity, or any other, is impossible to us; for though we cannot observe it of our own strength, *we can by God's assistance.* "It must be said that what we can do with the Divine assistance is not altogether impossible to us." Let no one say that it appears an injustice to order a cripple to walk straight. No, says St. Augustine, it is not an injustice, provided always the means are given him to find the remedy for his lameness; for after this, if he still go lame, the fault is his own. "It is most wisely commanded that man should walk uprightly, so that when he sees that he cannot do so of himself, he may seek a remedy to heal the lameness of sin."

Finally, the same holy Doctor says that he will never know how to live well who does not know how to pray well. "He knows how to live aright who knows how to pray aright"; and, on the other hand, St. Francis of Assisi says that without Prayer you can never hope to find good fruit in a soul. Wrongly, therefore, do these sinners excuse themselves who say that they have no strength to resist temptation. But if you have not this strength, why do you not ask for it? is the reproof which St. James gives them: *You have not, because you ask not*—(James iv. 2). There is no doubt that we are too weak to resist the attacks of our enemies. But, on the other hand, it is certain that God is faithful, as the Apostle says, and will not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with the temptation issue, that ye may be able to bear it*—(1 Cor. x 13). "He will provide an issue for it," says Primasius, "by the protection of His grace, that you may be able to withstand the temptation." We are weak, but God is strong; when we ask Him for aid, He communicates His strength to us; and we shall be able to do all things, as the Apostle reasonably assured himself: *I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me*—(Philip. iv. 13). He, therefore, who falls has no excuse, says St. Chrysostom, because

he has neglected to pray; for if he had prayed, he would not have been overcome by his enemies. "Nor can any one be excused who, by ceasing to pray, has shown that he did not wish to overcome his enemy."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity believeth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BELIEVES ALL HIS WORDS.

I.

And this laxity of morals is the source whence have issued, and still issue daily, so many books and systems of Materialists, Indifferentists, Politicists, Deists, and Naturalists; some among them deny the existence of God, and some Divine Providence, saying that God, after having created men, takes no further notice of them, and is heedless whether they love or hate Him, whether they be saved or lost; others, again, deny the goodness of God, and maintain that He has created numberless souls for hell, becoming Himself their tempter to sin, that so they may damn themselves, and go into everlasting fire, to curse Him there forever!

Oh, ingratitude and wickedness of men! God has created them in His mercy, to make them eternally happy in Heaven; He has poured on them so many lights, benefits, and graces, to bring them to eternal life; for the same end He redeemed them at the price of so many sorrows and sufferings; and yet they strive to deny all, that they may give free rein to their vicious inclinations!

II.

But no; let men strive as they will, the unhappy beings cannot tear themselves away from remorse of conscience, and the dread of the Divine vengeance. On this subject

I have lately published a work entitled *The Truth of Faith*, in which I have clearly shown the inconsistency of all these systems of modern unbelievers. Oh, if they would but once forsake sin, and apply themselves earnestly to the love of Jesus Christ, they would then most certainly cast away all doubts about things of Faith, and firmly believe all the truths that God has revealed!

O my God, let not Thy precious Blood be shed for me in vain! Thou hast promised pardon to him who repents of his sins. O my God, I grieve from the bottom of my heart for the many offences I have committed against Thee. I now love Thee above all things. I will never sin again. No, my God, let me die rather than ever offend Thee.

Wednesday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MORTAL SIN.—ITS MALICE.

To understand how great is the malice of mortal sin we must first know who God is, and what a wretched being man is who dares to despise Him. Before God all the Saints and Angels are as nothing, and it is a worm of the earth who has the insolence to despise Him!

I.

What is mortal sin? According to St. Thomas and St. Augustine, *it is a turning-away from God*; an act of contempt for God's grace and love, and a throwing-off

of all respect for Him, by which the sinner declares to God's very face : I will not serve Thee ! I will act as I please, and, if by so doing, I displease Thee and forfeit Thy friendship, I care not !

To understand how great is the malice of mortal sin, we must first know who God is, and what a wretched being man is who despises Him. Before God all the Saints and Angels are as nothing, and shall a worm of the earth have the insolence to despise Him ?

But more than this. Man, by committing sin, not only despises a God of infinite majesty, but a God Who has so loved him as to die for the love of him. An eternity, therefore, would not be sufficient to bewail but one mortal sin.

He who commits mortal sin dishonours God by preferring before Him a whim, a fit of passion, a wretched gratification. A God so great and so good ! And so dishonoured !

O Lord, if Thou hadst not sacrificed Thyself on the Cross for the love of me, I should lose all hope of pardon ; but Thy death gives me confidence. *Into thy hands I commend my spirit*—(Ps. xxx. 6) I commend to Thee my soul for which Thou hast been pleased to shed Thy Blood and sacrifice Thy life ; grant that it may love Thee and never more lose Thee. I love Thee, my Jesus, my Love, and my Hope. And how shall I ever be able, after having learned how much Thou hast loved me, to separate myself from Thee, my only Good ?

What an affliction it is to us to be injured by one for whom we have done much ! God is not capable of grief ; but could He grieve, He would die of grief and sorrow at being despised by a creature for whom He gave even His very life.

O my accursed sins, a thousand times do I detest and abhor you ! You have caused me to offend my Redeemer, Who has loved me so much !

Unhappy souls, now confined in hell, you who, during life, said that sin was a slight evil, have you not to acknowledge now that all your torments are far less than what you deserved for your sins ?

II.

Sin must surely be a great evil since God, Who is Mercy itself, is obliged to punish it with an eternal hell. Yea, more! In order to satisfy Divine justice for sin, a God was obliged to sacrifice His own life!

O God, we know that hell is the most horrible punishment, and have we no fear of sin, which may cast us into that hell? We know that God has died, in order that He might be able to pardon our sins; and do we still continue to commit sin?

The loss of the least worldly possession makes us uneasy and sad; and does the loss of God distress us not?—a loss that should not fail to overwhelm us with affliction and grief for the remainder of our lives!

I give Thee thanks, O Lord, for having given me time to bewail my offences against Thee. O Jesus, I abhor and hate them. Give me still greater sorrow, still greater love, that I may lament all my sins, not so much on account of the punishment I have deserved for them, as for having offended Thee, my most amiable God.

What disquiet and fears agitate a courtier who is afraid of having offended his prince? And do we, who know for certain that we have displeased God, and forfeited His friendship, live tranquil, without grief or sorrow!

What care do not men take to avoid poison, which destroys only the body? And yet what great negligence in regard to sin which poisons the immortal soul, and robs us of God!

Let us not be ensnared by that wile of the devil, by which he suggests to us how easily we can afterwards confess a sin. Oh, how many has the enemy drawn into hell by this stratagem!

O my God, for how many years have I deserved to dwell in hell! Thou hast been waiting for me, that I may forever bless Thy mercy, and love Thee. Yes, my Jesus, I bless Thee and love Thee; and I trust in Thy merits that I shall nevermore be separated from Thy love. But if after so many graces and mercies I again

offend Thee, how shall I presume that Thou wilt not abandon me, or ever again forgive me? Permit it not, O Lord, that I ever offend Thee again!

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

III.—ON INVOKING THE SAINTS AND ON PRAYING TO THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

Here a question arises, whether it is *necessary* to have recourse to the intercession of the Saints to obtain the grace of God.

1. That it is a *lawful* and *useful thing to invoke the Saints*, as intercessors, to obtain for us, by the merits of Jesus Christ, that which we, for our demerits, are not worthy to receive, is a Doctrine of the Church, declared by the Council of Trent. "It is good and useful to invoke them by supplication, and to have recourse to their aid and influence to obtain benefits from God through His Son Jesus Christ."

Such invocation was condemned by the impious Calvin, but most foolishly. For if it is lawful and profitable to invoke *living Saints* to aid us, and to beseech them to assist us in prayers, as the Prophet Baruch did: *And pray ye for us to the Lord our God*—(Baruch i. 13); and St. Paul: *Brethren, pray for us*—(1 Thess. v. 25); and as God Himself commanded the friends of Job to recommend themselves to his prayers, that by the merits of Job He might look favourably on them: *Go to my servant Job, . . . and my servant Job shall pray for you; his face I will accept*—(Job xlii. 8); if, then, it is lawful for us to recommend ourselves to the *living*, how can it be unlawful to invoke the Saints who in Heaven enjoy God face to face? This is not derogatory to the honour due to God, but it is doubling it; for

it is honouring the King not only in His Person but in His servants. Therefore, says, St. Thomas, it is good to have recourse to many Saints, "because by the prayers of many we can obtain that which we cannot by the prayers of one." And if any one object: But why have recourse to the Saints to pray for us, when they are already praying for all who are worthy of it? The same Doctor answers that no one can be said to be worthy that the Saints should pray for him; but that "he becomes worthy by having recourse to the Saints with devotion."

2. Again, it is disputed whether it is useful to recommend one's self to the Souls in Purgatory. Some say that the Souls in that state cannot pray for us; and these rely on the authority of St. Thomas, who says that those Souls, while they are being purified by pain, are inferior to us, and therefore "are not in a state to pray for us, but rather require our prayers." But many other Doctors, as Bellarmine, Cardinal Gotti, Lessius, and others, affirm with great probability that we should piously believe that God manifests our prayers to those Holy Souls, that they may in turn pray for us; and that so the charitable interchange of mutual prayer may be kept up between them and us. Nor do St. Thomas's words present much difficulty; for, as Sylvius and Gotti say, it is one thing *not to be in a state to pray*, another *not to be able to pray*. It is true that those Souls are not in a state to pray, because, as St. Thomas says, while suffering they are inferior to us, and rather require our prayers; nevertheless, in this state they are well able to pray, as they are the friends of God. If a father keeps a son whom he tenderly loves in confinement for some fault; if the son then is not in a state to pray for himself, is that any reason why he cannot pray for others? And may he not expect to obtain what he asks, knowing, as he does, his father's affection for him? So the Souls in Purgatory, being beloved by God, and confirmed in grace, have absolutely no impediment to prevent them from praying for us. Still the Church does not invoke them, or implore their intercession,

because ordinarily they have no cognisance of our prayers. But we may piously believe that God makes our prayers known to them; and then they, full of charity as they are, most assuredly do not omit to pray for us. St. Catherine of Bologna, whenever she desired any favour, had recourse to the Souls in Purgatory, and was immediately heard. She even testified that by the intercession of the Souls in Purgatory she had obtained many graces which had not been accorded to her by the intercession of the Saints. But here let me make a digression in favour of those Holy Souls.

3. If we desire the aid of their prayers, it is but fair that we should succour them with our prayers and good works. I said it is fair, but I should have said, *it is a Christian duty*; for Charity obliges us to succour our neighbour when he requires our aid, and we can help him without grave inconvenience. Now it is certain that amongst our neighbours are to be reckoned the Souls in Purgatory, who, although no longer living in this world, yet have not left the Communion of Saints. "The souls of the pious dead," says St. Augustine, "are not separated from the Church," and St. Thomas says more to our purpose that the Charity which is due to the dead who died in the grace of God is only an extension of the same Charity which we owe to our neighbour while living: "Charity, which is the bond that unites the members of the Church, extends not only to the living, but also to the dead who die in Charity." Therefore, we ought to succour, according to our ability, those Holy Souls as our neighbours; and as their necessities are greater than those of our other neighbours, for this reason our duty to succour them seems also to be greater.

But now, what are the necessities of those holy prisoners? It is certain that their pains are immense. The fire that tortures them, says St. Augustine, is more excruciating than any pain that man can endure in this life: "That fire will be more painful than anything that man can suffer in this life." St. Thomas thinks the same, and supposes it to be identical with the fire of hell: "The damned are tormented and the elect purified

in the same fire." And this only relates to the *pain of sense*. But the *pain of loss*, that is, the privation of the sight of God, which those Holy Souls suffer, is much greater; because not only their natural affection, but also the supernatural love of God, wherewith they burn, draws them with such violence to be united with their Sovereign Good, that when they see the barrier which their sins have put in the way, they feel a pain so acute that, if they were capable of death, they could not live a moment. So that, as St. Chrysostom says, this pain of the deprivation of God tortures them incomparably more than the pain of sense : " The flames of a thousand hells together could not inflict such torments as the pain of loss by itself." So that those Holy Souls would rather suffer every other possible torture than be deprived for a single instant of the union with God for which they long. So St. Thomas says that the pain of Purgatory exceeds anything that can be endured in this life : " The pain of Purgatory must exceed all pain of this life." And Denis the Carthusian relates that a dead person who had been raised to life by the intercession of St. Jerome, told St. Cyril of Jerusalem that all the torments of this earth are refreshing and delightful when compared with the very least pain in Purgatory : " If all the torments of the world were compared with the least that can be had in Purgatory they would appear to be comforts." And he adds that if a man had once felt these torments, he would rather suffer all earthly sorrows that man can endure till the Day of Judgment than suffer for one day the least pain of Purgatory. Hence St. Cyril wrote to St. Augustine : " That as far as regards the infliction of suffering, these pains are the same as those of hell—their *only difference* being that *they are not eternal*." Hence we see that the pains of these Holy Souls are excessive, while, on the other hand, they cannot help themselves; because, as Job says : *they are in chains, and are bound with the cords of poverty*—(Job xxxvi. 8). They are destined to reign with Christ; but they are withheld from taking possession of their kingdom till the time of their purga-

tion is accomplished. And they cannot help themselves (at least not sufficiently, even according to those Theologians who assert that they can by their prayers gain some relief) to throw off their chains, until they have entirely satisfied the justice of God. This is precisely what a Cistercian monk said to the sacristan of the monastery: "Help me, I beseech you, with your prayers; for of myself I can obtain nothing." And this is consistent with the saying of St. Bonaventure: "Destitution impedes solvency." That is, those souls are so poor, that they have no means of making satisfaction.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity believeth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST BELIEVES ALL HIS WORDS.

I.

The true lover of Jesus Christ keeps Eternal Truths constantly in view, and orders all his actions according to them. Oh, how thoroughly does he who loves Jesus Christ understand the force of that saying of the Wise Man: *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity*—(Eccles. i. 2)—that all earthly greatness is mere smoke, mire and delusion; that the soul's only welfare and happiness consists in loving its Creator, and in doing His blessed will; that we are, in reality, no more than what we are before God; that it is of no advantage to gain the whole world, if the soul be lost; that all the goods of the world can never satisfy the human heart, that only God Himself can satisfy it; and in fine, that we must leave all in order to gain all.

My beloved Redeemer, O Life of my soul, I firmly believe that Thou art the only Good worthy of being

loved! I believe that Thou art the greatest Lover of my soul, since through love alone Thou didst die, overwhelmed with sorrows, for love of me. I believe there is no greater blessing in this world, or in the next, than to love Thee, and to do Thy adorable will. All this I believe most firmly; so that I renounce all things that I may belong wholly to Thee, and that I may possess Thee alone.

II.

Charity believeth all things. There are other Christians —though not so perverse as the class we have mentioned, who would fain believe in nothing, so that they may give full scope to their unruly passions, and live on undisturbed by the stings of remorse—there are others, I say, who believe indeed, but their Faith is languid; they believe the most holy Mysteries of Religion, the Truths of Revelation contained in the Gospel, the Trinity, the Redemption, the holy Sacraments, and the rest; still they do not believe all. Jesus Christ has said: *Blessed are the poor! Blessed are they that hunger! Blessed are they that suffer persecution! Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and shall say all manner of evil against you!*—(Matt. v. 3—11). This is the teaching of Jesus Christ in the Gospel. How, then, can it be said that those believe in the Gospel who say: "Blessed are the rich! Blessed are those who have to suffer notning! Blessed are those who can have their amusements and pitiable is the man who suffers persecution and ill-treatment from others"? We must certainly say of such as these that either they do not believe the Gospel or that they believe only a part of it. He who believes all the Gospel esteems it his highest fortune, and a mark of Divine favour in this world, to be poor, to be sick, to be humiliated, to be despised and ill-treated by men. Such is the belief, and such the language, of one who believes all that is said in the Gospel, and has a real love for Jesus Christ.

Help me, through the merits of Thy sacred Passion, O my Jesus, and make me such as Thou wouldst have me to be. I believe in Thee, O infallible Truth! I trust in

Thee, O infinite Mercy! I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! O infinite Love, I give myself wholly to Thee, Who hast given Thyself wholly to me in Thy Passion, and in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

And I recommend myself to thee, O Mary, Refuge of sinners, and Mother of God.

Thursday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

ABUSE OF DIVINE MERCY.

God has pity on those who fear Him, but not on sinners who despise Him. To offend God because He shows us mercy, is to provoke Him in the highest degree to chastise us.

I.

God has pity on those who fear Him but not on sinners who despise Him. To offend God because He shows us mercy is to provoke Him in the highest degree to chastise us.

Again, to offer an insult to God, because God is a forgiving God, is to deride Him; but *God is not mocked* —(Gal. vi. 7).

The devil will say to you: "But who knows? Even with this other sin it may be that you shall yet be saved." But meanwhile, if you sin, you yourself may condemn your soul to hell. Who knows? It may be that as yet you shall be saved; but it may also happen, and more easily happen, that you may be lost. And is the affair of eternal Salvation to be risked on a *who knows?*

If in the meantime death should come upon you! If God should abandon you after that other sin! What would then become of you?

No, my God, I will never more offend Thee. How many are now suffering in hell for fewer sins than mine? I will no longer be devoted to self, but will be Thine and entirely Thine. To Thee I consecrate my whole liberty and my will. *I am thine; do thou save me*—(Ps. cxviii. 94). Save me from hell, but first save me from sin. I love Thee, my Jesus, I will never more forsake Thee.

The Fathers of the Church say that God has determined the number of sins He will forgive each one. Hence, as we know not this number, we ought to fear lest with every one more additional sin God should abandon us. This dreadful thought—Who knows whether God will any more pardon me?—ought to be a great restraint upon us and keep us from again offending God: with this fear we should be secure.

II.

He who has been the more favoured by God with lights and graces ought to be the more afraid of being abandoned by Him. The Angelic Doctor says that the grievousness of sin increases in proportion to the ingratitude with which sin is committed. Woe, then, to the Christian who, after having been enriched with the graces of God, offends Him mortally!

O my Jesus, while Thou hast shown me numberless mercies, I have repaid them by multiplied offences! Thou hast bestowed favours upon me, and I, in return, have despised Thee! But now I love Thee with my whole heart, and I desire to make amends by my love for all the offences I have committed against Thee. Oh, do Thou enlighten and strengthen me!

Sister Mary Strozzi says that "sin in a religious person strikes Heaven with horror, and obliges God to turn away from that soul."

He who has not a great dread of mortal sin is not far from falling into it. Hence it is necessary to fly from dangerous occasions as much as possible.

It is necessary also to fly from all deliberate venial sins. Father Alvarez used to say: "Little voluntary faults do not kill the soul, but they so weaken it that, when there comes a grievous temptation, it will not have strength to resist, and will fall."

St. Teresa has written: "From wilful sin, however small it be, may God deliver us!" Because, as the Saint says, a deliberate venial sin does us more harm than all the devils in hell.

No, my Jesus, no, I will no more offend Thee; neither in great things nor in small. Thou hast done too much to oblige me to love Thee. I desire rather to die than to give Thee the least offence. Thou dost not deserve insult; but rather all my love, and I desire to love Thee with all my strength. Give me Thy assistance.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

IV.—ON INVOKING THE SAINTS AND ON PRAYING TO THE SOULS IN PURGATORY AND HELPING THEM BY OUR PRAYERS.

Since it is certain, and even of Faith, that by our suffrages, and chiefly by our prayers, as particularly recommended and practised by the Church, we can relieve those Holy Souls, *I do not know how to excuse that man from sin who neglects to give them some assistance, at least by his prayers.* If a sense of duty will not persuade us to succour them, let us think of the pleasure it will give Jesus Christ to see us endeavouring to deliver His beloved spouses from prison, in order that He may have them with Him in Paradise. Let us think of the store of merit which we can lay up by practising this great act of Charity; let us think, too, that those Souls are not ungrateful, and will never forget the great benefit we do them in relieving them of their pains, and

in obtaining for them, by our prayers, anticipation of their entrance into glory; so that when they are there they will never neglect to pray for us. And if God promises mercy to him who practises mercy towards his neighbour—*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*—(Matt. v. 7)—he may reasonably expect to be saved who remembers to assist those Souls so afflicted, and yet so dear to God. Jonathan, after having saved the Hebrews from ruin by a victory over their enemies was condemned to death by his father, Saul, for having tasted some honey against his express commands; but the people came before the king, and said: *Shall Jonathan then die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel?*—(1 Kings xiv. 45). So may we expect, that if any of us ever obtains, by his prayers, the liberation of a Soul from Purgatory, that Soul will say to God: "Lord, suffer not him who has delivered me from my torments to be lost." And if Saul spared Jonathan's life at the request of his people, God will not refuse the salvation of a Christian to the prayers of a Soul which is His own spouse. Moreover, St. Augustine says that God will cause those who in this life have succoured those Holy Souls, when they come to Purgatory themselves, to be most succoured by others. I may here observe that, in practice, one of the best suffrages is to hear Mass for them, and during the Holy Sacrifice to recommend them to God by the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. The following form may be used: *Eternal Father, I offer Thee this Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, with all the pains which He suffered in His life and death; and by the merits of His Passion I recommend to Thee the Souls in Purgatory, and especially that of, etc.* And it is a very charitable act to recommend, at the same time, the souls of all those who are in their agony.

4. Whatever doubt there may be whether or not the *Souls in Purgatory can pray for us,* and therefore whether or not it is useful to recommend ourselves to their prayers,

there can be no doubt whatever with regard to *the Saints*. For it is certain that *it is most useful to have recourse to the intercession of the Saints* canonized by the Church, who are already enjoying the vision of God. To suppose that the Church can err in canonizing is a sin, or is heresy, according to St. Bonaventure, Bellarmine, and others; or at least very near to heresy, according to Suarez, Azorius, Gotti, etc. : because the Sovereign Pontiff, according to St. Thomas, is guided by the infallible influence of the Holy Ghost in an especial way when canonizing the Saints.

But to return to the question just proposed; *are we obliged to have recourse to the intercession of the Saints?* I have no wish to undertake to decide this question; but I cannot omit the exposition of the teaching of St. Thomas. In several places above quoted, and especially in his *Book of Sentences*, he expressly lays it down as certain that every one is bound to pray; because (as he asserts) in no other way can the graces necessary for salvation be obtained from God, except by Prayer : "Every man is bound to pray, from the fact that he is bound to procure spiritual good for himself, which can only be got from God; so it can only be obtained by asking it of God." Then, in another place of the same Book, he proposes the exact question, "Whether we are bound to pray to the Saints to intercede for us?" And he answers as follows—in order to catch his real meaning, we will quote the entire passage : "According to Dionysius, the order which God has instituted for His creatures requires that things which are remote may be brought to God by means of things which are nearer to Him. Hence, as the Saints in Heaven are nearest of all to Him, the order of His law requires that we who *remaining in the body are absent from the Lord*, should be brought to Him by means of the Saints; and this is effected by the Divine Goodness pouring forth His gifts through them. And as the path of our return to God should correspond to the path of the good things which

proceed from Him to us, it follows that, as the benefits of God come down to us by means of the suffrages of the Saints, we ought to be brought to God by the same way, so that a second time we may receive His benefits by the mediation of the Saints. Hence it is that we make them our intercessors with God, and, as it were, our mediators, when we ask them to pray for us." Note well the words—"The order of God's law requires"; and especially note the last words—"As the benefits of God come down to us by means of the suffrages of the Saints, in the same way we must be brought back to God, so that a second time we may receive His benefits by the mediation of the Saints." So that, according to St. Thomas, the order of the Divine law requires that we mortals should be saved by means of the Saints, in that we receive by their intercession the help necessary for our salvation. He then puts the objection that it appears superfluous to have recourse to the Saints, since God is infinitely more merciful than they, and more ready to hear us. This he answers by saying : God has so ordered not on account of any want of clemency on His part, but to keep the right order which He has universally established, of working by means of second causes. "It is not for want of mercy, but to preserve the aforesaid order in the creation."

In conformity with this doctrine of St. Thomas, the Continuator of Tourneley says with Sylvius, that although God only is to be prayed to as the Author of grace, yet we are bound to have recourse also to the intercession of the Saints, so as to observe the order which God has established with regard to our salvation, which is, that the inferior should be saved by imploring the aid of the superior. "By the law of nature we are bound to observe the order which God has appointed; but God has appointed that the inferior should obtain salvation by imploring the assistance of his superior."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity hopeth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

Hope increases Charity, and Charity increases Hope. Hope in the Divine goodness undoubtedly gives an increase to our love of Jesus Christ. St. Thomas says that in the very moment when we hope to receive some benefit from a person, we begin also to love him. On this account, the Lord forbids us to put our trust in creatures : *Put not your trust in princes*—(Ps. cxlv. 2). Further, He pronounces a curse on those who do so : *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man*—(Jer. xvii. 5). God does not wish us to trust in creatures, because He does not wish us to fix our love upon them. Hence St. Vincent de Paul said : " Let us beware of reposing too much confidence in men ; for when God beholds us thus leaning on them for support, He Himself withdraws from us. On the other hand, the more we trust in God, the more we shall advance in His holy love" : *I have run the way of thy commandments, when thou didst enlarge my heart*—(Ps. cxviii. 32). Oh, how rapidly does that soul advance in perfection who has her heart dilated with confidence in God ! She flies rather than runs ; for by making God the foundation of all her Hope she flings aside her own weakness, and borrows the strength of God Himself, which is communicated to all who place confidence in Him : *They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, and they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint*—(Is. xl. 31). The eagle is the

bird that soars nearest the sun; in like manner, the soul that has God for her trust becomes detached from the earth, and more and more united to God by love.

II.

Now as Hope increases the love of God, so does love help to increase hope; for charity makes us the adopted *sons of God*. In the natural order we are the work of His hands; but in the supernatural order we are made sons of God, and partakers of the Divine nature through the merits of Jesus Christ; as the Apostle St. Peter writes: *That by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature*—(2 Peter i. 4). And if Charity makes us *the sons of God*, it consequently makes us heirs of Heaven, according to St. Paul: *And if sons, heirs also*—(Rom. viii. 17). Now a son claims the right of abiding under the paternal roof; an heir is entitled to the property; and thus Charity increases the Hope of Paradise; so that the souls that love God cry out incessantly: *Thy kingdom come*! *Thy kingdom come*!

Friday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

VENIAL SIN.

Venial sin is, unfortunately regarded as a slight evil. Is that called a slight evil which is an offence against God!

A man will go on committing venial sins, and foolishly

says : " It will be enough for me to be saved !" But I answer : By continuing that course you will not be saved ! For, as St. Gregory says, the soul never remains where it falls, but descends much lower.

I.

Venial sin is, unfortunately, regarded as a slight evil. Is that called a slight evil which is an offence against God !

A man will go on committing venial sins, and foolishly says : " It will be enough for me to be saved !" But I answer : By continuing that course you will not be saved ! For, as St. Gregory says, the soul never remains where it falls, but descends much lower.

St. Isodore writes that he who makes no account of venial sins is permitted by the Almighty to fall into mortal sins, in punishment of his little love of God. And our Lord Himself said to the Blessed Henry Suso that those who have not a horror of venial sins expose themselves to much greater dangers than they are aware of ; because it thus becomes much more difficult for them to persevere in grace.

The Council of Trent teaches that we cannot persevere in grace without the special assistance of God ; but he is quite undeserving of such special assistance who offends God by voluntary venial sins, and without a thought of amendment.

Chastise me not, O Lord, as I have deserved ! Remember not the many offences I have committed against Thee, and deprive me not of Thy light and assistance. I desire to amend ; I desire to be Thine. O Omnipotent God, accept of me and change me ! This is my hope.

Our Lord said to Blessed Angela de Foligno : " Those who have been enlightened by Me to aim at perfection, but who debase their souls and walk in the ordinary way, will be abandoned by me."

He who serves God, but is not afraid of offending Him by venial gratifications, would seem to think that God

deserves no better. He declares, in fact, that God is not deserving of so much love as to oblige us to prefer His pleasure to our own satisfaction.

Habitual defects, says St. Augustine, are a kind of leprosy, which renders the soul so disgusting that God deprives it of His loving embraces.

I see, O Lord, that Thou hast not yet abandoned me, as I have deserved; strengthen me, therefore, to shake off my tepidity. I desire never more deliberately to offend Thee. I desire to love Thee with my whole soul. O Jesus, help me! In Thee do I confide.

II.

St. Francis de Sales says that it is an artifice of Satan to bind souls first with a hair, that he may afterwards bind them with a chain, and make them slaves. Let us therefore be on our guard not to be entangled by any passion. A soul that is entangled by passion is either lost or in great danger of being lost.

"The devil," said Mary Victoria Strada, "when he cannot have much is content with little, but by that little he gains much in the end."

Our Lord declares that the lukewarm are loathsome and disgusting to Him: *Because thou art lukewarm . . . I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth*—(Apoc. iii. 16). This means abandonment by God.

Tepidity is a kind of fever, which is scarcely perceived, but if neglected becomes fatal; inasmuch as tepidity renders the soul insensible to remorse of conscience.

O Jesus, do not cast me off, as I have deserved! Look not on my ingratitude, but on the sufferings Thou hast endured for my sake. I am sorry for all my offences against Thee. I love Thee, O my God, and from this day forward I desire to do all in my power to please Thee. O Love of my soul! I have much offended Thee; grant that for the remainder of my life I may love Thee very much. O Mary, my hope, succour me by thy holy intercession.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS NECESSITY.

V.—THE INTERCESSION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

If it be true that the intercession of the Saints is necessary for us, much more is it true of the intercession of the Mother of God, whose prayers are certainly of more value in His sight than those of all the rest of the inhabitants of Heaven together. For St. Thomas says that the Saints, in proportion to the merits by which they have obtained grace for themselves, are able also to save others; but that Jesus Christ, and so also His Mother, have merited so much grace, that They can save all men. "It is a great thing in any Saint that he should have grace enough for the salvation of many besides himself; but if he had enough for the salvation of all men, this would be the greatest of all; and this is the case with Christ, and with the Blessed Virgin." And St. Bernard speaks thus to Mary: "Through thee we have access to thy Son, O discoverer of grace and Mother of salvation, that through thee He may receive us, Who through thee was given to us." These words signify, that as we have access to the Father only by means of the Son, Who is the *Mediator of Justice*, so we have access to the Son only by means of the Mother, who is *mediator of grace*, and who obtains for us, by her intercession, the gifts which Jesus Christ has merited for us. And therefore St. Bernard says, in another place, that Mary has received a twofold fulness of grace. The first was the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, Who was made Man in her most holy womb; the second in that fulness of grace which we receive from God by means of her prayers. Hence the Saint adds: "God has placed the fulness of all good in Mary, that if we have any hope, any grace, any salvation, we may

know that it overflows from her who *ascendeth abounding with delights*. She is a garden of delights, whose odours spread abroad and abound, that is, the gifts of graces." So that whatever good we have from God, we receive all by the intercession of Mary. And why so? Because, says St. Bernard, it is God's will: "Such is His will, Who would have us receive everything through Mary." But the more precise reason is deduced from the expression of St. Augustine, that Mary is justly called our Mother because she co-operated by her charity in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, by which we become members of Jesus Christ, our Head: "But clearly she is the Mother of His members (which we are), because she co-operated by her charity in the birth of the faithful in the Church, and they are members of that Head." Therefore, as Mary co-operated by her charity in the spiritual birth of the faithful, so also God willed that she should co-operate by her intercession to make them enjoy the life of grace in this world, and the life of glory in the next; and therefore the Church makes us salute her and give her absolutely the titles of "our *Life*, our *Sweetness*, and our *Hope*."

Hence St. Bernard exhorts us to have continual recourse to the Mother of God, because her prayers are certain to be heard by her Son: "Go to Mary, I say, without hesitation; the Son will hear the Mother." And then he adds: "My children, she is the ladder of sinners, she is my chief confidence, she is the whole ground of my hope." He calls her "ladder," because, as you cannot mount the third step except you put your foot on the second, nor can you arrive at the second except by the first, so you cannot come to God except by means of Jesus Christ, nor can you come to Christ except by means of His Mother. Then he calls her "his greatest security, and the whole ground of his hope"; because, as he affirms, God wills that all the graces which He gives us should pass through the hands of Mary. And he concludes by saying that we ought to ask all the graces which we desire through Mary; because she obtains whatever she seeks, and her prayers cannot be rejected.

"Let us seek grace, and let us seek it through Mary; because what she seeks she finds, and she cannot be disappointed." The following Saints teach the same as St. Bernard: St. Ephrem: "We have no other confidence than from thee, O purest Virgin!" St. Ildephonsus: "All the good things that the Divine Majesty has determined to give, He has also decreed to commit to thy hands; for to thee are entrusted the treasures and the ornaments of grace." St. Germanus: "If thou desertest us, what will become of us, O life of Christians?" St. Peter Damien: "In thy hands are all the treasures of the mercies of God." St. Antoninus: "He who seeks graces without her, attempts to fly without wings. St. Bernardine of Sienna: "Thou art the dispenser of all graces; our salvation is in thy hands." In another place, he not only says that all graces are transmitted to us by means of Mary, but he also asserts that the Blessed Virgin, from the time she became Mother of God, acquired a certain *jurisdiction* over all the graces that are given to us. "Through the Virgin the vital graces are transfused from Christ, the Head, into His mystical body. From the time when the Virgin Mother conceived in her womb the Word of God, she obtained a certain jurisdiction (if I may so speak) over every temporal procession of the Holy Ghost; so that no creature could obtain any grace from God except by the dispensation of His sweet Mother." And he concludes: "Therefore all gifts, virtues, and graces are dispensed through her hands to whom she wills, and as she wills." St. Bonaventure says the same: "Since the whole Divine nature was in the womb of the Virgin, I do not fear to teach that she has a certain jurisdiction over all the streams of grace; for her womb was, as it were, an ocean of the Divine nature, whence all the streams of grace must emanate." On the authority of these Saints many Theologians have piously and reasonably defended the opinion that there is no grace given to us except by means of the intercession of Mary; so Mendoza, Vega, Paciucchelli, Segneri, Poiré, Crasset, and others, as also the learned Alexander Natalis, who

says : " Since it is from God we expect all good things, He wishes us to ask them through the intercession of the Virgin Mother, when, as is fitting, we invoke her." And he quotes in confirmation the passage of St. Bernard : " Such is His Will, Who has determined that we should receive all through Mary." Contenson says the same, in a comment on the words addressed by Jesus on the Cross to St. John, *Behold thy mother*—(Jo. xix. 27); as though He said : " No one shall be partaker of My Blood except by the intercession of My Mother. My Wounds are Fountains of grace; but their stream shall flow to no one, except through the channel of Mary. O My disciple John, I will love you as you love her."

Besides it is certain that if God is pleased when we have recourse to the Saints, He will be much more pleased when we avail ourselves of the intercession of Mary, that she by her merits may compensate for our unworthiness, according to the words of St. Anselm : " that the dignity of the intercessor may supply for our poverty. So that to invoke the Virgin is not to distrust God's Mercy but to fear our own unworthiness." St. Thomas, speaking of her dignity, says it is, in a sense, infinite. " From the fact that she is the Mother of God she has a certain infinite dignity."

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Conclusion.

Let us conclude this point by giving the gist of all that has been said hitherto.

He who prays is certainly saved. He who does not pray is certainly damned. All the Blessed (except infants) have been saved by Prayer. All the damned have been lost through not praying. If they had prayed they would not have been lost.

And this is, and will be, their greatest torment in hell, to think how easily they might have been saved, only by asking God for His graces. But now for these miserable ones the time for Prayer is over.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity hopeth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

The Lord God loves those who love Him : *I love them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 17). He showers down His graces on those that seek Him by love : *The Lord is good . . . to the soul that seeketh him*—(Lament. iii. 25). Consequently, the soul that loves God most has the greatest hope in His goodness. This confidence produces that imperturbable tranquillity in the Saints which makes them always joyful and full of peace, even amid the severest trials; for their love of Jesus Christ, and the conviction they have of His liberality towards those who love Him, leads them to trust solely in Him; and thus they find a lasting repose. The sacred spouse abounded with delights, because she loved none but her Spouse, and leaned entirely on Him for support; and she was full of contentment, since she well knew how generous her Beloved is towards all that love Him; so that of her it is written : *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?*—(Cant. viii. 5). These words of the Wise Man are most true : *All good things came to me together with her*—(Wis. vii. 11). With Charity all blessings are introduced into the soul.

II.

The primary object of Christian Hope is God, Whom the soul enjoys in the Kingdom of Heaven. But we must not suppose that the hope of enjoying God in Paradise is any obstacle to Charity; since the hope of

Paradise is inseparably connected with Charity, which there receives its full and complete perfection. Charity is that infinite treasure, spoken of by the Wise Man, which makes us the friends of God : *An infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God* —(Wis. vii. 14). The angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, says that friendship is founded on the mutual communication of goods; for as friendship is nothing more than a mutual love between friends, it follows that there must be a reciprocal interchange of the goods which each possesses. Hence the Saint says : " If there be no communication, there is no friendship." On this account Jesus Christ says to His disciples : *I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you*—(Jo. xv. 15). Since He had made them His friends, He had communicated all His secrets to them.

Saturday—Sixth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE MERCY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN TOWARDS SINNERS WHO INVOKE HER.

Mary is called the Mother of Mercy, because, like a mother, she cannot see her children in danger of being lost without giving them her assistance. She is so solicitous about the relief of the miserable that she appears to desire nothing with greater ardour than to comfort them.

I.

Consider that Mary is so merciful an advocate she not only assists all who have recourse to her, but also goes in search of the miserable in order to defend and save them. Behold how she invites us all, and encourages us to hope for every good, if we have recourse to her. *In me is all hope of life and virtue. Come over to me, all ye who desire me*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 25-26). In explaining this passage, the devout Pelbart says : " She invites all, the just and sinners." The devil, according to St. Peter, goes about continually seeking *whom he may devour* —(1 Peter v. 8). But this Divine Mother, says Bernard de Bustis, goes about seeking whom she may save. Mary is called the Mother of Mercy ; because, like a mother, she cannot see her children in danger of being lost without giving them assistance. Mary pities all our miseries, and constantly seeks our salvation. And, asks St. Germanus, who, after Jesus, has greater care of our salvation, than thou, O Mother of Mercy? St. Bonaventure says that Mary is so solicitous about the relief of the miserable that she appears to desire nothing with greater ardour than to comfort them.

She certainly assists us as often as we have recourse to her, but this, adds Richard of St. Victor, is not enough for her; she anticipates our supplications, and obtains aid for us before we ask her prayers. Moreover, the same author says that Mary is so full of mercy that, as soon as she sees misery, she instantly obtains relief, and cannot behold any one in distress without coming to his assistance. It was thus she acted when she lived on this earth, as we learn from what happened at the marriage of Cana in Galilee ; where, when the wine failed, she did not wait to be asked, but taking pity on the affliction and shame of the spouses, asked her Son to console them, saying : *They have no wine*—(Jo. ii. 3). Thus she induced Him to change, by miracle, water into wine. But, says St. Bonaventure, if Mary's compassion for the afflicted was so great while she was in this world, her pity for us is certainly much greater now that she is in Heaven, where she has a better knowledge of our miser-

ies, and greater compassion for us. Novarino adds: If Mary, unasked, shows such readiness to afford relief, how much more careful will she be to console those who ask her prayers!

II.

Ah! let us never cease to have recourse in all our necessities to the Divine Mother, who is always ready to obtain relief for all who pray to her. "You will find her ever ready to assist," says Richard of St. Laurence. And Bernardine de Bustis adds that she desires more ardently to obtain graces for us than we do to receive them. Hence he says that, whenever we have recourse to her, we shall always find her hands full of graces and mercies. According to St. Bonaventure, Mary's desire for our welfare and salvation is so great that she feels offended not only with those who do her a positive injury but also with those who neglect to ask favours from her. And, on the other hand, the Saint affirms that they who invoke Mary's intercession (that is, with a determination to amend their lives) are saved. Hence he calls her the salvation of those who invoke her. Let us, then, always have recourse to the Divine Mother, and always say to her with the holy Doctor: "In thee, O Lady, have I hoped; may I not be confounded forever." No, O Lady, O Mother of God, O Mary, I shall not be lost after having placed my hopes in thee after Jesus.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS POWER.

I.—ITS POWER AND EXCELLENCE WITH GOD.

Our prayers are so dear to God that He has appointed the Angels to present them to Him as soon as they come forth from our mouths. "The angels," says St. Hilary, "preside over the prayers of the faithful, and offer them daily to God." This is that *smoke of the incense of the*

prayers of the saints—(Apoc. viii. 3), which St. John saw ascending to God from the hands of Angels. This he saw in another place represented by golden phials full of sweet odours, very acceptable to God. But in order to understand better the value of prayers in God's sight it is sufficient to read both in the Old and New Testaments the innumerable promises which God makes to the man that prays. *Cry to me, and I will hear thee*—(Jer. xxxiii. 3). *Call upon me, and I will deliver thee*—(Ps. xlix. 15). *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. He shall give good things to them that ask him*—(Matt. vii. 7, 11). *Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth*—(Luke xi. 10). *Whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my father*—(Matt. xviii. 19). *All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you*—(Mark xi. 24). *If you shall ask me anything in my name, that will I do*—(Jo. xiv. 14). *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). *Amen, amen, I say unto you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you*—(Jo. xvi. 23). There are many similar texts, but it would take too long to quote them.

God wills us to be saved; but for our greater good He wills us to be saved as conquerors. While, therefore, we remain here, we have to live in a continual warfare; and if we would be saved, we have to fight and conquer. "No one can be crowned without victory," says St. Chrysostom. We are very feeble, and our enemies are many and mighty; how shall we be able to stand against them, or to defeat them? Let us take courage, and say with the Apostle, *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me*—(Philip. iv. 13). By Prayer we *can do all things*; for by this means God will give us that strength which we want. Theodoret says that Prayer is omnipotent; it is but one, yet it can do all things: "Prayer, though one, can do all things." And St. Bonaventure asserts that by Prayer we may obtain every good and escape every evil: "By Prayer, the possession

of every good, the liberation from every evil." St. Laurence Justinian says that by means of Prayer we build for ourselves a strong tower, where we shall be secure from all the snares and assaults of our enemies: "By the exercise of Prayer man is able to erect a citadel for himself." "The powers of hell are mighty," says St. Bernard, "but Prayer is stronger than all the devils." Yes; for by Prayer the soul obtains God's help, which is stronger than any created power. Thus David encouraged himself in his fears: *Praising I will call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from my enemies*—(Ps. xvii. 4). For, as St. Chrysostom says, "Prayer is a strong weapon, a defence, a port, and a treasure." It is a weapon sufficient to overcome every assault of the devil; it is a defence to preserve us in every danger; it is a port where we may be safe in every tempest; and it is at the same time a treasure which provides us with every good.

II.—POWER OF PRAYER AGAINST TEMPTATION.

God knows the great good which it does us to be obliged to pray, and therefore permits us, as we have already shown—(*The Necessity of Prayer*, p. 66) to be assaulted by our enemies, in order that we may ask Him for the help which He offers and promises us. But as He is pleased when we run to Him in our dangers, so is He displeased when He sees us neglectful of Prayer. As the king, says St. Bonaventure, would think it faithlessness if an officer, when attacked, did not ask him for reinforcements, so God thinks Himself betrayed by the man who, when he finds himself surrounded by temptations, does not run to Him for assistance. For He desires to help us; and only waits to be asked, and then gives abundant succour. This is strikingly shown by Isaias, when, on God's part, he told King Achaz to ask some sign to assure himself of God's readiness to help him: *Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God*—(Is. vii. 11). The impious king answered: *I will not ask, and I will not tempt the Lord*—(Is. vii. 12). He trusted in his own power to overcome his enemies without God's aid.

And for this the Prophet reproved him : *Hear ye, therefore, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to be grievous to men, that you are grievous to my God also?* —(Is. vii. 13), which means that that man is grievous and offensive to God who will not ask Him for the graces which He offers.

Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you—(Matt. xi. 28). " My poor children," says our Saviour, " though you find yourselves assailed by enemies, and oppressed with the weight of your sins, do not lose heart, but have recourse to Me in Prayer, and I will give you strength to resist; and I will give you a remedy for all your misfortunes." In another place He says, by the mouth of Isaias : *Come and accuse me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow*—(Is. i. 18). O men, come to me; though your consciences are horribly defiled, yet come; I even give you leave to reproach Me (so to speak), if, after you have recourse to Me, I do not give you grace to become white as snow.

What is Prayer? It is, as St. Chrysostom says, " the anchor of those tossed on the sea, the treasure of the poor, the cure of diseases, the safeguard of health." It is a secure anchor for him who is in peril of shipwreck; it is a treasury of immense wealth for him who is poor; it is a most efficacious medicine for him who is sick; and it is a certain preservative for him who would keep himself in health. What does Prayer effect? Let us hear St. Laurence Justinian : " It pleases God, it gets what it asks, it overcomes enemies, it changes men." It appeases the wrath of God Who pardons all who pray with humility. It obtains every grace that is asked for; it vanquishes all the strength of the tempter; it gives sight to the blind; it changes the weak into strong, and sinners into Saints. Let him who wants light ask it of God, and it shall be given. As soon as I had recourse to God, says Solomon, He granted me wisdom : *I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me*—(Wis. vii. 7). Let him who wants fortitude ask it of God and it shall be given. For how, in fact, did the Mar-

tyrs obtain strength to resist tyrants, except by Prayer, which gave them force to overcome dangers and death? "He who uses this great weapon," says St. Chrysostom, "knows not death, leaves the earth, enters Heaven, lives with God." He falls not into sin; he loses affection for the earth; he makes his abode in Heaven; and begins even in this life to enjoy the conversation of God. Why then should you disquiet such a man by saying: How do you know that you are written in the Book of Life? How do you know whether God will give you efficacious grace and the gift of perseverance? *Be nothing solicitous*, says St. Paul, *but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known unto God*—(Philip. iv. 6). Drive from you all those cares which only lessen your confidence, and make you more tepid and slothful in walking in the Way of Salvation. Pray and seek always, make your prayers known to God, and thank Him for having promised to give you the gifts you desire whenever you ask for them, namely, efficacious grace, perseverance, salvation, and everything you may desire. The Lord has given us our post in the battle against powerful foes; but He is faithful in His promises, and will never allow us to be assaulted more violently than we can resist: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able*—(1 Cor. x. 13). He is faithful, since He instantly succours the man who invokes Him. The learned Cardinal Gotti writes that God is bound, when we are tempted and fly to His protection, to give us, by the grace prepared and offered to all, the strength by which we not only *can*, but *will* actually resist: *for we can do all things in Him who strengthens us* by His grace if we humbly ask for it. We can do all things with God's help, which is granted to every one who humbly seeks it; so that we have no excuse when we allow ourselves to be overcome by a temptation. We are conquered solely by our own fault, because we do not pray. By Prayer all the snares and power of the devil are easily overcome. "By prayer all hurtful things are put to flight," says St. Augustine.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity hopeth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

St. Francis de Sales says: "If by a supposition of what is impossible, there could be an infinite Good (that is a God) to whom we belonged in no way whatever, and with Whom we could have no union or communication, we should certainly esteem Him more than ourselves; so that we might feel a great desire of being able to love Him; but we should not actually love Him, because love is built upon union; for love is a friendship, and the foundation of friendship is to have things in common; and its end is union." Thus St. Thomas teaches us that Charity does not exclude the desire of the reward prepared for us in Heaven by Almighty God; on the contrary, it makes us look to it as the chief object of our love, for such is God, Who constitutes the bliss of Paradise; for friendship implies that friends mutually rejoice in one another.

The Spouse in the Canticles refers to this reciprocal interchange of goods, when she says: *My beloved to me and I to him*—(Cant. ii. 16). In Heaven the soul belongs wholly to God and God belongs wholly to the soul, according to the measure of her capacity and of her merits.

II.

From the persuasion the soul has of her own nothingness in comparison with the infinite attractions of Almighty God, and aware consequently that the claims of God on her love are beyond measure greater than her own can be on the love of God,

she is far more anxious to procure the Divine pleasure than her own enjoyment; so that she is more gratified by the pleasure she affords Almighty God by giving herself entirely to Him, than by God's giving Himself entirely to her; but at the same time she is delighted when God thus gives Himself to her, inasmuch as she is thereby animated to give herself up to God with a greater intensity of love. She indeed rejoices at the glory which God imparts to her, but for the sole purpose of referring it back to God Himself, and of thus doing her utmost to increase the Divine glory. At the sight of God in Heaven the soul cannot help loving Him with all her strength; on the other hand, God cannot hate anyone that loves Him: but if (supposing what is impossible) God could hate a soul that loves Him, and if a beatified soul could exist without loving God, she would much rather endure all the pains of hell on condition of being allowed to love God as much as He should hate her, than to live without loving God, even though she could enjoy all the delights of Paradise. So it is; for that conviction which the soul has of God's boundless claims upon her love gives her a greater desire to love God than to be loved by Him.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH.—THE WORLDLING AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH.

What will be the terror of the poor worldling when he reflects: In a short time I shall be no more! And I know not whether I shall be happy or miserable for eternity! O God, what consternation will the bare words,

Judgment, Hell, Eternity, strike into the souls of poor worldlings!

I.

We must die. Sooner or later we must all die. In every age houses and cities are filled with new inhabitants, and their predecessors are consigned to the grave.

We are born but to die—born with a halter, as it were, about our necks. However long, then, our life may be, a day, an hour, will come which will be our last, and this hour is already determined.

I thank Thee, O God, for the patience with which Thou hast borne with me. Oh, that I had died rather than have ever offended Thee! But since Thou givest me time to repair the past, make known to me what Thou requirest of me, and I will obey Thee in all things.

In a few years neither I who write nor thou who readest will be living on this earth. As we have heard the bell toll for others, so will others one day hear it toll for us. As we now read the names of others inscribed in the lists of the dead, so will others read our names.

In a word, there is no alternative; we must all die. And, what is more terrible, we can die but once; and if once lost, we shall be lost for ever.

What will be your alarm when it is announced to you that you must receive the Last Sacraments, and that there is no time to be lost! Then will you see your relatives and friends leave your room, and none remain but your confessor and those who are to attend you in your last moments.

O Jesus, I will not wait until death to give myself to Thee. Thou hast said that Thou knowest not how to reject the soul that seeks Thee: *Seek and you shall find* —(Matt. vii. 7).

Now, therefore, O Jesus, do I seek Thee; grant that I may find Thee. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! Thee alone do I desire, and besides Thee, nothing more.

In the midst of his schemes and worldly projects the man of the world shall hear it said to him: "My brother, you are fatally ill, and must prepare to die." He would wish to put his accounts in order; but, alas! the terror

and confusion which agitate him render him incapable of doing anything.

Whatever he sees or hears adds to his pain and distress. All worldly things are now thorns to him : the remembrance of past pleasures, his vanities, his successes, the friends who have withdrawn him from God, vain apparel; all are thorns, and all alarm and torment him.

What will be his terror when he reflects : " In a short time I shall be no more; and I know not whether I shall be happy, or miserable, for eternity !" O God, what consternation will the bare words, Judgment, Hell, Eternity, strike into the souls of poor dying worldlings !

My Redeemer, I believe that Thou hast died for me. From Thy precious Blood do I hope for salvation. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness ! And I am grieved for having offended Thee. O Jesus, my Hope, my Love, have pity on me.

II.

Consider that poor worldling now seized with his last illness. He who but a little while ago went about slandering, threatening, and ridiculing others, is suddenly struck down and deprived of his strength and bodily senses, so that he can no longer speak, or see, or hear.

Alas ! the unhappy man thinks now no more of his worldly projects, or his schemes of vanity; the thought of the account which he must soon render to God alone occupies his mind. His relatives are weeping and sighing, or in sad silence around him, and his confessor is there to assist him.

Physicians consult together. Everything increases his alarm. In such a state, he thinks no longer of his amusements; he thinks only of the news which has been brought him—his malady is fatal !

But there is no help for it, and in this state of confusion, in this tempest of pain, affliction, and fear, he must prepare himself to depart out of this world. But how is he to prepare himself in so short a time and his mind so troubled ? But it matters not ! There is no remedy; he must depart ! What is done is done !

O God, what shall my end be? No, I desire not to die in so great uncertainty as to my salvation. I will change my life. O Jesus! help me, for I am resolved to love Thee henceforward with my whole heart. Unite me to Thyself, and never suffer me to be separated from Thee.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, ITS POWER.

III.—GOD IS ALWAYS READY TO HEAR OUR PRAYER.

St. Bernardine of Sienna says that Prayer is a faithful ambassador, well known to the King of Heaven, and having access to His audience chamber, and able by his importunity to induce the merciful Heart of the King to grant every aid to us His wretched creatures, groaning in the midst of our conflicts and miseries in this valley of tears. Isaias also assures us, that as soon as the Lord hears our prayers He is moved with compassion towards us, and does not leave us to cry long to Him, but instantly replies, and grants us what we ask: *Weeping, thou shalt not weep; he will surely have pity upon thee: at the voice of thy cry as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee*—(Is. xxx. 19). In another place He complains of us by the mouth of Jeremias: *Am I become a wilderness to Israel, or a lateward springing land? Why then have my people said, we are revolted, we will come to thee no more?*—(Jer. ii. 31). Why do you say that you will no more have recourse to Me? Has My mercy become to you a barren land, which can yield you no fruits of grace? or a tardy soil, which yields its fruit too late? So has our loving Lord assured us that He never neglects to hear us, and to hear us instantly when we pray; and so does He reproach those who neglect to pray through diffidence of being heard.

If God were to allow us to present our petitions to Him once a month, even this would be a great favour. The kings of the earth give audience a few times a year, but God gives continual audience. St. Chrysostom writes that God is always waiting to hear our prayers, and that a case never occurred when He neglected to hear a petition offered to Him with the proper dispositions. And again, he says that when we pray to God, before we have finished recounting to Him our petitions, He has already heard us : "It is always obtained, even while we are yet praying." We even have the like promise from God : *As they are yet speaking I will hear*—(Is. lxv. 24). The Lord, says David, stands near to everyone who prays, to console, to hear, and to save him : *The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him; to all that call upon him in truth* (that is, *as they ought*). *He will do the will of them that fear him; and he will hear their prayer and will save them*—(Ps. cxliv. 18, 19). It was in this that Moses gloried, saying : *There is no other nation so great, that has gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions*—(Deut. iv. 7). The gods of the Gentiles were deaf to those who invoked them, for they were wretched fabrications, which could do nothing. But our God, Who is Almighty, is not deaf to our prayers, but always stands near the man who prays, ready to grant him all the graces which he asks : *In what day soever I shall call upon thee, behold I shall know that thou art my God*—(Ps. lv. 10). Lord, says the Psalmist, hereby do I know that Thou art my God, all goodness and mercy, in that, whenever I have recourse to Thee, Thou dost instantly help me.

IV.—THE POWER OF PRAYER TO OBTAIN GREAT THINGS FOR US.

We are so poor that we have nothing; but if we pray we are no longer poor. If we are poor, God is rich; and God, as the Apostle says, is all liberality to him that calls for His aid : *Rich unto all who call upon Him*—(Rom. x. 12). Since therefore (as St. Augustine exhorts us), we have to do with a Lord of infinite power and infi-

nite riches, let us not go to Him for little and valueless things, but let us ask some great thing of Him : " You seek from the Almighty—seek something great." If a man went to a king to ask some trumpery coin, like a farthing, methinks that man would but insult the king. On the other hand, we honour God, we honour His mercy, and His liberality, when, though we see how miserable we are, and how unworthy of any kindness, we yet ask for great graces, trusting in the goodness of God, and in His faithfulness to His promises of granting to the man who prays whatever grace he asks : *You shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done unto you* —(Jo. xv. 7). St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said that " God feels Himself so honoured and is so delighted when we ask for His grace, that He is, in a certain sense, grateful to us; because when we do this we seem to open to Him a way to do us a kindness, and to satisfy His nature, which is to do good to all." And let us be sure that, when we seek God's grace, He always gives us more than we ask : *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not*—(James i. 5). Thus speaks St. James, to show us that God is not like men, parsimonious of His goods. Men, though rich and liberal, when they give alms, are always somewhat niggardly, and generally give less than what is asked of them, because their wealth, however great it be, is always finite, so that the more they give the less they have. But God, when He is asked, gives His good things *abundantly*, that is, with a generous hand, always giving more than is asked, because His wealth is infinite, and the more He gives the more He has to give : *For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild; and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee*—(Ps. lxxxv. 5).

On this point, then, we have to fix all our attention, namely, to pray with confidence, feeling sure that by Prayer all the treasures of Heaven are thrown open to us. " Let us attend to this," says St. Chrysostom, "and we shall open Heaven to ourselves." Prayer is a treasure; he who asks most receives most. St. Bona-

venture says that every time a man has recourse to God by fervent Prayer he gains good things that are of more value than the whole world : " A man gains any day more by devout prayer than the whole world is worth." Some devout souls spend a great deal of time *in reading*, and *in meditating*, but pay little attention to *petition*. There is no doubt that Spiritual Reading and Meditation on the Eternal Truths are very useful things; " but," says St. Augustine, " it is of much more use to pray." By reading and meditating we learn our duty; but by Prayer we obtain the grace to do it. " It is better to pray than to read : by reading we know what we ought to do; by prayer we receive what we ask." What is the use of knowing our duty and then not doing it, but to make us more guilty in God's sight? Read and meditate as we like, we shall never satisfy our obligations, unless we ask of God the grace to fulfil them.

And, therefore, as St. Isidore observes, the devil is never more busy to distract us with the thoughts of worldly cares than when he perceives us praying and asking God for grace : " Then mostly does the devil insinuate thoughts, when he sees a man praying." And why? Because the enemy sees that at no other time do we gain so many treasures of heavenly goods as when we pray. This is the chief fruit of Mental Prayer, to ask God for the graces which we need for perseverance and for eternal salvation; and chiefly for this reason is it that Mental Prayer is morally necessary for the soul, to enable it to preserve itself in the grace of God. For if a person neglects in the time of Meditation to ask for the help necessary for perseverance he will not do so at any other time; for without Meditation he will not think of asking for it, and will not even think of the necessity of asking for it. On the other hand, he who makes his Meditation every day will easily see the needs of his soul, its dangers, and the necessity for his praying; and so he will pray, and will obtain the graces which will enable him to persevere and save his soul. Father Segneri said of himself that when he began to meditate he aimed

rather at exciting affections than at making petitions. But when he came to know the immense utility of Prayer, he more and more applied himself, in his long mental prayer, to making petitions.

I will cry like a young swallow, said the devout King Ezechias—(Is. xxxviii. 14). The young of the swallow do nothing but cry to their mother for help and food; so should we all do, if we would preserve our life of grace. We should be always crying to God for aid to avoid the death of sin, and to advance in His holy love. Father Rodriguez relates that the Ancient Fathers who were our first instructors in the spiritual life held a conference to determine which was the exercise most useful and most necessary for salvation; and that they determined it was to repeat over and over again the short prayer of David, *Incline unto my aid, O God*—(Ps. lxix. 2). "This," says Cassian, "is what everyone ought to do who wishes to be saved: he ought to be always saying, My God, help me! My God, help me!" We ought to do this the first thing when we awake in the morning; and then to continue doing it in all our needs, and when attending to our business, whether spiritual or temporal; and most especially when we find ourselves troubled by any temptation or passion. St. Bonaventure says that at times we obtain a grace by a short prayer sooner than by many other good works: "Sometimes a man can soon obtain by a short prayer what he would with difficulty obtain by pious works." St. Ambrose says that he who prays while he is praying obtains what he asks, because the very act of prayer is the same as receiving: "He who asks of God, while he asks receives; for to ask is to receive." Hence St. Chrysostom wrote that "there is nothing more powerful than a man who prays," because such a one is made partaker of the power of God. To arrive at perfection, says St. Bernard, we must meditate and pray: by Meditation we see what we want; by Prayer we receive what we want. "Let us mount up by Meditation and Prayer: the one points out what may be deficient, the other obtains it."

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, to save one's soul without Prayer is most difficult, and (as we have seen) in the ordinary course of God's Providence, even impossible. But by praying our salvation is made secure, and very easy. It is not necessary in order to save our souls to go among the heathen, and give up our life as martyrs. Nor is it necessary, like the hermits, to retire into the desert, and eat nothing but herbs. What does it cost us to say, *My God, help me! Lord, assist me! Have mercy on me!* Is there anything more easy than this? And this little will be enough to save us, if we will be diligent in doing it. St. Laurence Justinian specially exhorts us to oblige ourselves to say a prayer at least when we begin any action: "We must endeavour to offer a prayer at least in the beginning of every work." Cassian attests that the principal exhortation of the Ancient Fathers was to have recourse to God with short but frequent prayers. St. Bernard says: "Let no one undervalue his prayer, for God does not undervalue it . . . He will give either what we ask or what He knows to be better." And let us understand that if we do not pray we have no excuse, because the grace of Prayer is given to everyone. It is in our power to pray whenever we will, as David says of himself: *With me is prayer to the God of my life; I will say to God, thou art my support*—(Ps. xli. 9). On this point I shall later speak at length, and I will make it quite clear that God gives to all men the grace of Prayer in order that thereby they may obtain every help, and even more than they need, for keeping the Divine Law and for persevering till death. At present I will only say that if we are not saved the whole fault will be ours; and we shall have to answer for our own failure because we did not pray.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity hopeth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

Charity hopeth all things. St. Thomas, with the Master of the Sentences, defines Christian Hope to be a "sure expectation of eternal happiness." Its certainty arises from the infallible promise of God to give eternal life to His faithful servants. Now Charity, by taking away sin, at the same time takes away all obstacles to our obtaining the happiness of the Blessed; hence the greater our Charity the greater also and firmer is our Hope; Hope, on the other hand, can in no way interfere with the purity of love, because, according to the observation of St. Denis the Areopagite, love tends naturally to union with the object beloved; or, as St. Augustine asserts in stronger terms, love itself is like a chain of gold that links together the hearts of the lover and the loved. "Love is as it were a kind of bond uniting two together." And as this union can never be effected at a distance, the person that loves always longs for the presence of the object of his love. The Sacred Spouse languished in the absence of her Beloved, and entreated her companions to acquaint Him with her sorrow, that He might come and console her with His presence: *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love* —(Cant. v. 8). A soul that loves Jesus Christ exceedingly cannot but desire and hope, as long as she remains on earth, to go without delay and be united to her beloved Lord in Heaven.

II.

Thus we see that the desire to go and see God in Heaven, not so much for the delight we shall experience in loving God, as for the pleasure we shall afford God by loving Him, is pure and perfect love. Neither is the joy of the Blessed in Heaven any hindrance to the purity of their love; such joy is inseparable from their love; but they take far more satisfaction in their love of God than in the joy that it affords them. Someone will, perhaps, say : But the desire of a reward is rather a love of concupiscence than a love of friendship. We must therefore make a distinction between temporal rewards promised by men, and the eternal rewards of Paradise promised by God to those who love Him : the rewards given by man are distinct from and independent of their own persons, since they do not bestow themselves, but only their goods, when they would remunerate others; on the contrary, the principal reward which God gives to the Blessed is the gift of Himself : *I am thy reward exceeding great*—(Gen. xv.1). Hence to desire Heaven is the same thing as to desire God, Who is our last end.

Monday—Seventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH.—THE FINAL PREPARATIONS.

At the approach of death the Crucifix will be presented to you, and you will be admonished that Jesus Christ must be your only refuge, your only consolation. To those who have had but little love for Jesus Crucified, this will bring fear rather than encouragement. O my God, assist me by Thy graces to change my life!

I.

If you were about to die, what would you not give for another year, or another month? Resolve, therefore, to do now what you will not be able to do when the hour of your death comes.

Who knows but that this year, or this very month, or even this very day may be your last?

You would not wish to die in the state in which you now are; and will you dare to continue to live on in this state? You lament over those who die suddenly, because they have no time to prepare for death; and you have this precious time, and will you not prepare?

O my God, I will not force Thee to cast me away! I thank Thee for the mercies which Thou hast bestowed upon me; assist me by Thy grace to change my life. I see that Thou desirest to save me; and I desire to be saved that I may praise and love Thee for all eternity.

At the approach of death the Crucifix will be presented to you, and you will be admonished that Jesus Christ must be your only refuge and consolation. To those who have had but little love for Jesus Crucified, this will bring fear rather than encouragement. On the contrary, what a consolation will it be to those who have left all for the love of Jesus!

My beloved Jesus, Thou shalt be my only love in life and in death! *My God and my All!*

For the dying whose consciences are in a bad state, how terrible will be the sole mention of Eternity! They will not hear anything else spoken of but their malady, physicians, remedies; and if the affairs of their soul be mentioned they soon grow weary, change the subject, and beg of you to let them be at rest!

The sinner will exclaim: "Oh, that I had time to amend my life!" But it will be said to him: *Depart out of this world.* "Call in additional medical aid," he will answer; "and try other remedies." But of what avail will these be? His hour is come; he must depart and go into Eternity.

II.

To him who loves God how consoling will it be to hear it said : *Depart!* He will not be terrified, but rejoice at the thought of being soon out of all danger of losing his sovereign and only Good.

Let thy place be this day in peace, and thy abode in holy Sion. What a joyful announcement to him who dies in a well-grounded certainty of being in the grace of God!

O Jesus, in Thy precious Blood I place my hope, that Thou wilt conduct me into that place of peace, where I shall be able to say : O God of my heart, I have now no longer any fear of losing Thee!

Have compassion, O Lord, on his sighs : have compassion on his tears. My God, I will not wait until the hour of death to bewail my offences against Thee; I now detest and abhor them, and am sorry for them with my whole heart, and would willingly die of sorrow for having committed them. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! I desire to live and to die in sorrow and in love.

Remember, O Lord, he is thy creature; not made by strange gods, but by thee, the only living and true God. O my God, Thou Who hast created me for Thyself, cast me not away from Thy face. If I have despised Thee, I now love Thee more than myself, and I desire to love Thee alone.

He who has had but little love for Jesus Christ will tremble at the coming of the Holy Viaticum; but he, on the contrary, who has loved only Jesus, will be filled with confidence and love, when he beholds his Lord at hand to accompany him in his passage into Eternity.

While Extreme Unction is being administered, the devil will remind the dying man of all the sins committed by means of the senses. Let us therefore hasten to weep for them before the approach of death.

When he has received all the Sacraments, his relatives and friends will retire, and he will be left alone in the presence of the Crucifix.

O Jesus, when all have abandoned me, do not Thou depart from me! *In thee, O Lord have I hoped, let me never be confounded*—(Ps. xxx. 2).

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

I.—THAT THE PRAYER BE OFFERED FOR ONE'S SELF OR FOR THINGS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.

Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you—(Jo. xvi. 23). Jesus Christ, then, has promised that whatever we ask the Father in His Name, the Father will give us. But always with the understanding that we ask under *the proper conditions.* Many seek, says St. James, and obtain not, because they seek improperly : *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss*—(James iv. 3). So St. Basil, following out the argument of the Apostle, says : " You sometimes ask and receive not, because you have asked badly; either without faith, or lightly, or you have requested things not fit for you, or you have not persevered." " Faithlessly" (*infideliter*), with little faith or confidence; " lightly" (*leviter*), that is, with little desire for the grace you ask; " things not fit for you," that is, things not conducive to your salvation; or, you have left off praying. Hence St. Thomas reduces to four in number the conditions required to make Prayer efficacious. These four Conditions are :—

A.—That the Prayer be offered for one's self;
B.—For things necessary for salvation;
C.—Piously;
D.—With Perseverance.

A.—THAT THE PRAYER BE OFFERED FOR ONE'S SELF.

The First Condition, then, of Prayer is that you make it *for yourself.* The Angelic Doctor holds that one man cannot *ex condigno* (i.e. by title of justice) obtain for another eternal life; and, consequently, not even those

graces which are requisite for his salvation, for, as he says, the promise is made not to others, but only to those that pray : *He will give to you.*

There are, nevertheless, many Theologians, Cornelius à Lapide, Sylvester, Tolet, Habert, and others, who hold the opposite doctrine, on the authority of St. Basil, who teaches that Prayer, by virtue of God's promise, is infallibly efficacious, even for those for whom we pray, provided they put no positive impediment in the way. And they support their doctrine by Scripture : *Pray for one another, that you may be saved; for the continual prayer of the just man availeth much*—(James v. 16). *Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you* —(Luke vi. 28). And better still, on the text of St. John : *He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not to death, let him ask, and life shall be given to him who sinneth not unto death*—(1 Jo. v. 16). St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, the Venerable Bede, and others explain the words *who sinneth not unto death* to mean the sinner who does not intend to remain obstinate till death; since for such a one a very extraordinary grace would be required. But for other sinners, who are not guilty of such malice, the Apostle promises their conversion to him who prays for them : *Let him ask, and life shall be given him for him that sinneth.*

Besides, it is quite certain that the prayers of others are of great use to sinners, and are very pleasing to God. The Lord complains of His servants who do not recommend sinners to Him, as He once complained to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, to whom He said one day : *See, my daughter, how many Christians are in the devil's hands; if My elect did not deliver them by their prayers they would be devoured.* But God specially requires this of Priests and Religious, The same Saint used to say to her nuns : "My sisters, God has not separated us from the world that we should only do good for ourselves but also that we should appease Him in behalf of sinners"; and God one day said to her : "I have given to you, My chosen spouses the City of Refuge (i.e. the Passion of Jesus Christ), that you may have a place

where you may obtain help for My creatures. Therefore have recourse to it, and thence stretch forth a helping hand to My creatures who are perishing, and even lay down your lives for them." For this reason the Saint, inflamed with holy zeal, used to offer God the Blood of the Redeemer fifty times a day in behalf of sinners, and was quite consumed with the desire she had for their conversion. She used to say: What pain it is, O Lord, to see how one could help Thy creatures by giving one's life for them and not be able to do so! In every exercise she recommended sinners to God; and it is written in her Life that she scarcely passed an hour in the day without praying for them. Frequently too, she arose in the middle of the night and went before the Blessed Sacrament to pray for them; and yet for all this, when she was once found bathed in tears, on being asked the cause, she answered, "Because I seem to myself to do nothing for the salvation of sinners." She went so far as to offer to endure even the pains of hell for their conversion, provided that in that place she might still love God; and often God gratified her by inflicting on her grievous pains and infirmities for the salvation of sinners. She prayed especially for Priests, seeing that their good life was the occasion of salvation to others, while their bad life was the cause of ruin to many; and therefore she prayed God to visit their faults upon her, saying: "Lord, make me die and return to life again as many times as is necessary to satisfy Thy justice for them!" And it is related in her Life that the Saint, by her prayers, did indeed release many souls from the hands of Lucifer.

I wished to speak rather particularly of the zeal of this Saint; but, indeed, no souls that really love God neglect to pray for poor sinners. For how is it possible for a person who loves God, and knows what love He has for our souls, and what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for their salvation, and how our Saviour desires us to pray for sinners—how is it possible, I say, that he should be able to look with indifference on the numbers of poor souls who are living without God, and are slaves of hell,

without being moved to importune God with frequent prayers to give light and strength to those wretched beings, so that they may rise from the miserable state of perdition in which they are slumbering? True it is that God has not promised to grant our requests when those for whom we pray put a positive impediment in the way of their conversion; but still, God of His goodness has often deigned, at the Prayer of His servants, to bring back the most blind and obstinate sinners to a state of salvation by means of extraordinary graces. Therefore let us never omit, when we say or hear Mass, when we receive Holy Communion, when we make our Meditation or the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, to recommend poor sinners to God. And a learned author says that he who prays for others will find that his prayers for himself are heard much sooner. But this is a digression. Let us now return to the examination of the other conditions that St. Thomas lays down as necessary for the efficacy of Prayer.

B.—THAT WE PRAY FOR THINGS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.

The Second Condition assigned by the Saint is that we ask those favours which are *necessary for salvation*; because the promise annexed to Prayer was not made with reference to temporal favours, which are not necessary for the salvation of the soul. St. Augustine, explaining the words of the Gospel, *whatever ye shall ask in my name,* says that what is in any way detrimental to salvation is not asked in the Name of the Saviour. Sometimes, says the same Father, we seek some temporal favours, and God does not hear us; but He does not hear us because He loves us and wishes to be merciful to us. The physician knows better than the patient what is good for the sick man. The physician who loves his patient will not allow him to have those things that he sees would do him harm. Oh, how many, if they had been sick or poor would have escaped those sins which they commit in health and affluence! And,

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE

therefore when men ask God for health or riches, He often denies them because He loves them, knowing that these things would be to them an occasion of losing His grace, or at any rate of growing tepid in the spiritual life. Not that we mean to say that it is any defect to pray to God for the necessaries of this present life, so far as they are not inconsistent with our eternal salvation, as the Wise Man said : *Give me only the necessaries of life* —(Prov. xxx. 8). Nor is it a defect, says St. Thomas, to have anxiety about such goods, if it is not inordinate. The defect consists in desiring and seeking these temporal goods, and in having an *inordinate anxiety* about them, as if they were our highest good. Therefore, when we ask of God these *temporal favours*, we ought always to ask them *with resignation*, and with the condition *if they will be useful to our souls;* and when we see that God does not grant them, let us be certain that He then denies them to us for the love He bears us, and because He sees that they would be injurious to the salvation of our souls.

It often happens that we pray God to deliver us from some dangerous temptation, and yet that God does not seem to hear us, but permits the temptation to continue troubling us. In such a case let us understand that God permits even this for our greater good. It is not *temptation* nor *bad thoughts* that separate us from God, but *our consent to the evil.* When a soul in temptation recommends itself to God, and by His aid resists, oh, how it then advances in perfection, and unites itself more closely to God ! and this is the reason why God does not hear it. St. Paul earnestly prayed to be delivered from the temptation of impurity : *There was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me; for which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me.* But God answered him that it was enough to have His grace : *My grace is sufficient for thee*—(2 Cor. xii. 7). So that even in temptation we ought to pray with resignation, saying : *Lord, deliver me from this trouble, if it is expedient to deliver me; and if not at least give me help to resist.* And here comes in what

St. Bernard says, that when we beg any grace of God, He gives us either that which we ask or some other thing more useful to us. He often leaves us to be buffeted by the waves in order to try our faithfulness, and for our greater profit. He would seem to be deaf to our prayers. But no; let us be sure that God then really hears us, and secretly aids us, and strengthens us by His grace to resist all the assaults of our enemies. See how He Himself assures us of this by the mouth of the Psalmist: *Thou calledst upon me in affliction, and I delivered thee: I heard thee in the secret place of tempest; I proved thee at the waters of contradiction*—(Ps. lxxx. 8).

The other considerations assigned by St. Thomas to Prayer are, that it is to be made *piously and perseveringly;* by *piously* he means *with humility and confidence*—by *perseveringly,* continuing to pray until death. We must now speak distinctly of each of these three conditions which are the most necessary for Prayer, namely, of *Humility, Confidence,* and *Perseverance.*

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity hopeth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

I wish here to propose a doubt which may rise in the mind of one who loves God, and strives to conform himself in all things to His blessed will. If it should be ever revealed to such an one that he was to be eternally lost, would be obliged to bow to it with resignation in order to practise conformity with the will of God? St. Thomas says no; and further, that he would sin by con-

senting to it, because he would be consenting to live in a state that involves sin, and is contrary to the last end for which God created him; for God did not create souls to hate Him, but to love Him in Heaven: so that He does not wish the death even of the sinner, but that all should be converted and saved. The holy Doctor says that God wishes no one to be damned except through sin; and therefore, a person, by consenting to his damnation, would not be acting in conformity with the will of God, but with the will of sin. But suppose that God, foreseeing the sin of a person, should have decreed his damnation, and that this decree should be revealed to him, would he be bound to coincide in it? In the same passage the Saint says, by no means; because such a revelation must not be taken as an irrevocable decree, but made merely *by way of communication*, as a threat of what would follow if he persists in sin.

II.

But let every one banish such baneful thoughts from his mind, as only calculated to cool his confidence and love. Let us love Jesus Christ as much as possible here below; let us always be sighing to go hence, and to behold Him in Paradise, that we may there love Him perfectly; let us make it the grand object of all our hopes to go thither to love Him with all our strength. We are commanded even in this life to love God with our whole strength: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength*—(Luke x. 27); but the angelical Doctor says that man cannot perfectly fulfil this precept upon earth; only Jesus Christ, Who was both God and Man, and the most holy Mary, who was full of grace and free from Original sin, perfectly fulfilled it. But we miserable children of Adam, infected as we are with sin, cannot love God without some imperfection; and it is in Heaven alone, when we shall meet God face to face, that we shall love Him, nay more, that we shall be necessitated to love Him with all our strength.

Tuesday—Seventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH.—THE LAST AGONY.

A cold sweat spreads itself over the sick man; his eyes grow dim; his pulse intermittent; his extremities become cold and he is stretched out on his bed like a corpse. He is now rapidly passing into Eternity.

O moment of death, upon which will depend an Eternity of happiness, or an Eternity of woe!

I.

A cold sweat spreads itself over the sick man, his eyes become dim, his pulse intermittent, his extremities become cold, he stretches himself out like a corpse, and his agony begins. He is already rapidly passing into Eternity.

His breath fails, the breathing is scarcely noticeable, and death is at hand. The priest lights a blessed candle and places it in his hand, and begins to repeat for him acts suitable for the soul's immediate departure. O light, enlighten now our souls, for then thou wilt be of but little service to us when the time has gone for repairing the evil we have done!

O God, how guilty will our offences, and how empty will the vanities of this world appear in the light of the last candle!

The dying man expires; and in the same moment in which he breathes his last, time for him is ended, and Eternity begins. O moment which will decide an Eternity of happiness or an Eternity of woe!

O Jesus, mercy! Pardon me and so unite me to Thee that I may not at my last moment be able to lose Thee forever.

The soul being departed, the priest says to the bystanders : He is dead ! Yes, he is dead—*Requiescat in pace! May he rest in peace* ! He rests in peace if he has died in peace with God; but if not, he will never enjoy peace so long as God shall be God.

As soon as he is dead the news spreads around. One says : He was an honest man, but not very devout. Another : I wonder is he saved ? His relatives and friends, to save their feelings, will not hear him spoken of, and wish those who mention him to speak of something else !

Thus, he who was the centre of conversation has become an object of horror for all. Go into his house, he is no longer there. His rooms, his bed, his furniture, are divided amongst others. And where is he ? His body is in the grave, his soul in Eternity !

II.

If you wish to see the dead man, open that grave ; he is no longer in the bloom of health, no longer feasting, but a heap of corruption, in which are engendered multitudes of worms. These will soon eat away the lips and the cheeks, so that in a little while nothing more will remain but a fetid skeleton, which, in time, will fall to pieces, the head from the trunk, and the bones from one another.

See, then, to what it will one day be reduced, this body of ours, on account of which we so often offend God !

O Saints of God, you remembered this, and kept your bodies in subjection by mortification ! Now your bones are venerated upon altars, and your souls are enjoying the sight of God, waiting for the day of final reward when your bodies will become your companions in glory, as they were formerly your companions in suffering.

Were I now in Eternity, what should I not wish to have done for God ?

St. Camillus of Lellis, looking on the graves of the dead, was accustomed to say : " Oh, if these were alive, what would they not now do for eternal life ? And I who am alive, what am I doing ?"

O Lord, do not cast me away with the reprobate on account of my ingratitude! Others have offended Thee in the midst of darkness and ignorance, but I have offended Thee in the midst of light. Thou didst fully enlighten me to know the wrong I did in committing sin; and yet I closed my eyes to Thy lights, trampled on Thy graces, and turned my back upon Thee. *Be not thou a terror unto me: Thou art my hope in the day of affliction*—(Jer. xvii. 17).

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

II.—THAT WE PRAY PIOUSLY.

(*a*) WITH HUMILITY.

The Lord does not indeed regard the prayers of His servants, but only of His servants who are *humble. He hath had regard to the prayer of the humble*—(Ps. ci. 18). Others he does not regard, but rejects them: *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*—(James iv. 6). He does not hear the prayers of the proud who trust in their own strength; but for that reason leaves them to their own feebleness; and in this state, deprived of God's aid, they must certainly perish. David had thus to lament: *Before I was humbled I offended*—(Ps. cxviii. 67). I sinned because I was not humble. The same thing happened to St. Peter, who, though he was warned by our Lord that all the disciples would abandon Him on that night—*All you shall be scandalised in me this night*—(Matt. xxvi. 31)—nevertheless, instead of acknowledging his own weakness, and begging our Lord's aid against his unfaithfulness, was too confident in his own strength, and said that though all should abandon Him he would never leave Him: *Although all*

shall be scandalised in thee, I will never be scandalised —(Matt. xxvi. 33). And although our Saviour again foretold to him, in a special manner, that in that very night, before the cock-crow, he should deny Him three times; yet, trusting in his own courage, he boasted, saying, *Yea, though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee*—(Matt. xxvi. 35). But what was the result? Scarcely had the unhappy man entered the house of the High Priest when he was accused of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, and three times did he deny with an oath that he had ever known Him : *And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man*—(Matt. xxvi. 72). If Peter had humbled himself and had asked our Lord for the grace of constancy, he would not have denied Him.

We ought all to feel that we are standing on the edge of a precipice, suspended over the abyss of all our sins, and supported only by the thread of God's grace. If this thread fails us, we shall certainly fall into the gulf, and shall commit the most horrible wickedness. *Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell*—(Ps. xciii. 17). If God had not succoured me I should have fallen into a thousand sins and now I should be in hell. So said the Psalmist, and so ought each of us to say. This is what St. Francis of Assisi meant when he said that he was the worst sinner in the world. But, my Father, said his companion, what you say is not true; there are many in the world who are certainly worse than you are. Yes, what I say is but too true, answered St. Francis, because if God did not keep His hand over me, I should commit every possible sin.

It is of Faith, that without the aid of grace we cannot do any good work, nor even think a good thought. " Without grace men can do no good whatever, either in thought or in deed," says St. Augustine. As the eye cannot see without light, so, says the holy Father, man can do no good without grace. The Apostle had said the same thing before him : *Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God*—(2 Cor. iii. 5). And David had said it before St. Paul : *Unless the Lord build the house,*

they labour in vain that build it—(Ps. cxxvi. 1). In vain does man weary himself to become a saint, unless God lends a helping hand : *Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it*—(Ps. cxxvi. 1). If God does not preserve the soul from sins, in vain will it try to preserve itself by its own strength : and therefore did the holy Prophet protest : *I will not trust in my bow*—(Ps. xliii. 7). I will not trust in my arms, but only in God, Who alone can save me.

Hence, whoever finds that he has done any good, and does not find that he has fallen into greater sins than those which are commonly committed, let him say with St. Paul : *By the grace of God I am what I am*—(1 Cor. xv. 10); and for the same reason, he ought never to cease to be afraid of falling in every occasion of sin : *Wherefore, he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall*—(1 Cor. x. 12). St. Paul wishes to warn us that he who feels himself secure of not falling is in great danger of falling; and he assigns the reason in another place, where he says : *If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself*—(Gal. vi. 3). So that St. Augustine wrote wisely, the presumption of stability renders many unstable; no one will be so firm as he who feels himself infirm. If a man says he has no fear, it is a sign that he trusts in himself, and in his good resolutions; but such a man, with his pernicious self-confidence, deceives himself, because, through trust in his own strength he neglects to fear; and through not fearing he neglects to recommend himself to God, and thus he will certainly fall. And so, for like reasons, we should all abstain from noticing with any vain-glory the sins of our neighbours; but rather we should esteem ourselves as worse in ourselves than they are, and should say : *Lord, if thou hadst not helped me, I should have done worse.* Otherwise, to punish us for our pride, God will permit us to fall into worse and more shameful sins. For this cause St. Paul instructs us to labour for our salvation : *With fear and trembling work out your salvation*—(Philip. ii. 12). Yes; for he who has a great fear of falling distrusts his own strength, and therefore places

his confidence in the Lord, and has recourse to Him in dangers; and God will aid him, and so he will vanquish his temptations, and will be saved. St. Philip Neri, walking one day through Rome, kept saying: "I am in despair!" A certain Religious rebuked him, and the Saint thereupon said: "My father, I am in *despair of myself*; but *I trust in God.*" So must we do, if we would be saved; we must always live in despair of doing anything by our own strength; and in so doing we shall imitate St. Philip, who used to say to God the first moment he awoke in the morning: "Lord, keep Thy hands over Philip this day; for if not, Philip will betray Thee."

This then, we may conclude with St. Augustine, is all the grand science of a Christian—to know that he is nothing, and can do nothing. "This is all knowledge, to know that man is nothing." For then he will never neglect to furnish himself, by Prayer to God, with that strength which he has not of himself and which he needs in order to resist temptation, and to do good. Thus, with the help of God, Who never refuses anything to the man who prays to Him in humility, he will be able to do all things: *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, and he will not depart until the Most High behold*—(Ecclus. xxxv. 21). The prayer of a humble soul penetrates the heavens and presents itself before the throne of God, and departs not without God's looking on it and hearing it. And though the soul be guilty of any number of sins, God never despises a heart that humbles itself: *A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*—(Ps. l. 19): *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble*—(James iv. 6). As the Lord is severe with the proud, and resists their prayers, so He is kind and liberal to the humble. This is precisely what Jesus Christ said one day to St. Catherine of Sienna: *Know, my daughter, that a soul that perseveres in humble Prayer gains every virtue.*

It will be of use to introduce here the advice which the learned and pious Palafox, Bishop of Osma, gives to spiritual persons who desire to become Saints. It occurs

in a note to the 18th Letter of St. Teresa, which she wrote to her confessor, to give him an account of all the grades of supernatural prayer with which God had favoured her. On this the Bishop writes that these supernatural graces which God deigned to grant to St. Teresa, as He had also done to other Saints, are not necessary in order to arrive at sanctity, since many souls have become Saints without them; and, on the other hand, many who had received them have, after all, been damned. Therefore he says it is superfluous, and even presumptuous, to desire and to ask for these supernatural gifts, when the true and only way to become a Saint is to exercise ourselves in virtue and in the love of God; and this is done by means of Prayer, and by corresponding to the inspirations and assistance of God, Who wishes nothing so much as to see us Saints. *For this is the will of God, your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 3).

Hence Bishop Palafox, speaking of the grades of supernatural Prayer mentioned in St. Teresa's Letter, namely, the *Prayer of Quiet*, the *Sleep* or *Suspension of the Faculties*, the *Prayer of Union*, *Ecstasy* or *Rapture*, *Flight* and *Impulse of the Spirit*, and the *Wound of Love*, says, very wisely, that as regards the *Prayer of Quiet*, what we ought to ask of God is that He would free us from attachment to earthly goods, and the desire of them, which give no peace, but bring disquiet and affliction to the soul : *Vanity of vanities*, as Solomon called them, *and vexation of spirit*—(Eccles. i. 2, 14). The heart of man will never find true peace if it does not empty itself of all that is not God, so as to leave itself all free for His love, that He alone may possess the whole of it. But this the soul cannot do of itself; it must obtain it of God by repeated prayers. As regards *the Sleep and Suspension of the Faculties*, *we* ought to ask God for grace to keep them *asleep to all that is temporal*, and only awake to consider God's goodness and to set our hearts upon His love and eternal happiness. As regards the *Union of the Faculties*, let us pray Him to give us grace not to think, nor to seek, nor to wish anything but what God wills; since all sanctity and the perfection of love con-

sists *in uniting our will to the will of God.* As regards *Ecstasy and Rapture*, let us pray God *to draw us away from the inordinate love of ourselves and of creatures*, and to draw us entirely to Himself. As regards *the Flight of the Spirit*, let us pray Him to give us grace to live altogether *detached from this world*, and to be as the swallows, that do not settle on the ground even to feed, but take their food flying. So should we use our temporal goods, but only as is necessary for the support of life, but always flying, without settling on the ground to look for earthly pleasures. As regards *Impulse of Spirit*, let us pray Him to give us *courage and strength to do violence to ourselves*, whenever it is necessary for resisting the assaults of our enemies, for conquering our passions, and for accepting sufferings even in the midst of desolation and dryness of spirit. Finally, as regards *the Wound of Love*, as a wound by its pain perpetually renews the remembrance of what we suffer, so ought *we to pray God to wound our hearts with His holy love* in such a way that we shall always be reminded of His goodness and of the love which He has borne us; and thus we should live in continual love of Him, and should be always pleasing Him with our works and our affections. But none of these graces can be obtained without Prayer; while with Prayer, provided it be *humble, confident, and persevering*, everything is obtained.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity hopeth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

Behold, then, the scope of all our desires and aspirations, of all our thoughts and ardent hopes; to go and enjoy God in Heaven, in order to love Him with all our

strength, and to rejoice in the enjoyment of God. The Blessed certainly rejoice in their own felicity in that kingdom of delights; but the chief source of their happiness, and that which absorbs all the rest, is to know that their beloved Lord possesses an infinite happiness; for they love God incomparably more than themselves. Each one of the Blessed has such a love for Him that he would willingly forfeit all happiness, and undergo the most cruel torments, rather than that God should lose, if it were possible for Him to lose, even the least particle of His happiness. Hence the sight of God's infinite happiness, and the knowledge that it can never suffer diminution for all eternity, constitutes his Paradise. This is the meaning of what our Lord says to every soul on whom He bestows the possession of eternal glory: *Enter into the joy of thy Lord*—(Matt. xxv. 21). It is not the joy that enters into the blessed soul, but the soul that enters into the joy of God, since the joy of God is the object of the joy of the Blessed. Thus the good of God will be the good of the Blessed; the riches of God will be their riches, and the happiness of God will be their happiness.

II.

In the instant that a soul enters Heaven, and sees by the light of glory the infinite beauty of God face to face, she is at once seized and all consumed with love. The happy soul is then as it were lost and immersed in that boundless ocean of the goodness of God. Then it is that she quite forgets herself, and, inebriated with Divine love, thinks only of loving her God: *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house*—(Ps. xxxv. 9). As one intoxicated no longer thinks of himself, so a soul in bliss can only think of loving and affording delight to her beloved Lord; she desires to possess Him entirely, and she does in fact possess Him, without fear of losing Him any more; she desires to give herself wholly to Him at every moment, and every moment she offers herself to God without reserve, and God receives her in His loving embraces, and so holds her, and shall hold her in the same fond embraces for all eternity.

Wednesday—Seventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DEATH.—THE DEATH OF THE JUST.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. That word—*Proficiscere* ! *Depart* !—which brings such terror to worldlings alarms not the just. To them it is not painful to leave all earthly goods, for God has been their only Treasure; nor honours, for they always despised them; nor friends and relatives, for they loved them only in God.

I.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints—(Ps. cxv. 15). St. Bernard says that the death of the just is called precious because it is the end of labour and the gate of life. To the Saints death is a reward, because it is the end of sufferings, pains, struggles, and the fear of losing God.

That word *Proficiscere* ! *Depart* !—which brings such terror to worldlings, alarms not the just. To them it is not painful to leave all worldly goods, for God has been their only Treasure : nor honours, for they always despised them : nor relatives, for they have loved them only in God. Hence, as they frequently repeated in life, so now with redoubled joy do they exclaim in death, *My God and my All!*

Nor do the pains of death afflict them; they rejoice in offering to God the last moments of life in testimony of their love for Him, uniting the sacrifice of their lives to the sacrifice Jesus Christ offered of His life on the Cross for the love of them.

Oh, what a consolation for the Saints is the thought that now the time is over when they could have offended

God, and were in constant danger of losing Him! Oh, what joy to be able then to embrace the Crucifix, and to say: *In peace, in the self same, I will sleep and I will rest!*—(Ps. iv. 9).

The devil will endeavour at that time to disquiet us by the sight of our sins; but if we have wept for them, and have loved Jesus Christ with our whole heart, Jesus will console us. God is more desirous for our salvation than the devil is for our perdition.

II.

Moreover, death is the gate of life. God is faithful, and will indeed at that supreme moment console those who have loved Him. Even in the sorrows of death He will bestow upon them a foretaste of Heaven. In the acts of confidence, of love of God, in the desire soon to behold Him, they will begin to taste that peace which they will enjoy throughout Eternity. What joy, in particular, will the Holy Viaticum afford to those who can say, with St. Philip Neri: "Behold my Love! Behold my Love!"

We should therefore fear not death but sin, which alone makes death so terrible. A great servant of God, Father Colombiere, said: "It is morally impossible for one who in life has been faithful to God to die an unhappy death."

He who loves God desires death, which will unite him eternally to God. It is a sign of but little love for God not to desire soon to behold Him.

Let us, therefore, now accept death and the loss of worldly things. We may do this now meritoriously, but then, it must be done forcibly and with danger of being lost. Let us live as though every day were to be the last of our lives. Oh, how well does he live who lives with the remembrance of death ever present to his mind!

O my God, when will the day arrive in which I shall see Thee and love Thee face to face? I do not deserve it: but Thy Wounds, O my Redeemer, are my hope. I will say to Thee with St. Bernard: *Thy wounds are my merits.* And hence I will have confidence, and will also

say to Thee with St. Augustine : *O that I may die, Lord, that I may behold Thee* ! O Mary, my Mother, in the Blood of Jesus Christ, and in thy holy intercession, do I hope to be saved, and to go to praise thee, thank thee, and love thee for ever in Heaven !

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

III.—CONFIDENCE—ITS EXCELLENCE AND NECESSITY.

The principal instruction that St. James gives us, if we wish by Prayer to obtain grace from God, is that we pray with a confidence that feels sure of being heard, and without hesitating : *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*—(James i. 6). St. Thomas teaches that as Prayer receives its power of meriting from Charity, so it receives from Faith and Confidence its power of being efficacious to obtain. St. Bernard teaches the same, saying that it is our confidence alone which obtains for us the Divine mercies. God is much pleased with our confidence in His mercy, because we then honour and exalt that infinite Goodness which it was His object in creating us to manifest to the world : *Let all those, O my God,* says the Royal Prophet, *who hope in thee be glad, for they shall be eternally happy, and Thou shalt dwell in them*—(Ps. v. 12). God protects and saves all those who confide in Him : *He is the protector of all that hope in him*—(Ps. xvii. 31). *Thou who savest them that trust in thee*—(Ps. xvi. 7). Oh, the great promises that are recorded in the Scriptures to all those who hope in God ! He who hopes in God will not fall into sin : *None of them that trust in him shall offend* —(Ps. xxxiii. 23). Yes, says David, because God has His eyes turned to all those who confide in His Goodness to deliver them by His aid from the death of sin. *Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him,*

and on them that hope for his mercy to deliver their souls from death—(Ps. xxxii. 18). And in another place God Himself says : *Because he hoped in me I will deliver him; I will deliver him and I will glorify him*—(Ps. xc. 14). Mark the word *because*. *Because* he confided in Me, I will protect, I will deliver him from his enemies, and from the danger of falling; and finally I will give him eternal glory. Isaias says of those who place their hope in God : *They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as the eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint*—(Is. xl. 31). They shall cease to be weak as they are now, and shall gain from God a great strength; they shall not faint; they shall not even feel weary in walking the way of salvation, but they shall run and fly as eagles; *in silence and in hope shall your strength be* —(Is. xxx. 15). All our strength, the Prophet tells us, consists in placing all our confidence in God, and in being silent; that is, in reposing in the arms of His Mercy, without trusting to our own efforts, or to human means.

And when did it ever happen that a man had confidence in God and was lost? *No one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded*—(Ecclus. ii. 11). It was this confidence that assured David that he would not perish : *In thee, O Lord, have I trusted; I shall not be confounded forever*—(Ps. xxx. 2). Perhaps, then, says St. Augustine, God could be a deceiver, Who offers to support us in dangers if we lean upon Him, and then withdraws Himself if we have recourse to Him? "God is not a deceiver, that He should offer to support us, and then when we lean upon Him should slip away from us." David calls the man happy who trusts in God : *Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee*—(Ps. lxxxiii. 13). And why? Because, says he, he who trusts in God will always find himself surrounded by God's Mercy. *Mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord*—(Ps. xxxi. 10). So that he shall be surrounded and guarded by God on every side in such a way that he shall be prevented from losing his soul.

It is for this cause that the Apostle recommends us so earnestly to preserve our confidence in God; for (he tells us) it will certainly obtain from Him a great remuneration: *Do not therefore lose your confidence, which hath a great reward*—(Heb. x. 35). As is our confidence, so shall be the graces we receive from God: if our confidence is great, great too will be the graces: "Great faith merits great things." St Bernard writes that divine Mercy is an inexhaustible fountain, and that he who brings to it the largest vessel of confidence shall take from it the largest measure of gifts: "Neither, O Lord, dost Thou put the oil of mercy into any other vessel than that of confidence." The Prophet had long before expressed the same thought: *Let thy mercy, O Lord be upon us, as we have hoped in thee*—(Ps. xxxii. 22). This was well exemplified in the Centurion to whom our Saviour said, in praise of his confidence: *Go and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee* —(Matt. viii. 13). And our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude that he who prays with confidence does Him in a manner such violence that He cannot but hear him in everything he asks. "Prayer," says St. John Climacus, "does a pious violence to God." It does Him a violence, but a violence which He likes, and which pleases Him.

Let us go, therefore, according to the admonition of St. Paul, *with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.*—(Heb. iv. 16). The throne of grace is Jesus Christ, Who is now sitting on the right hand of the Father; not on the throne of justice, but of grace, to obtain pardon for us all if we fall into sin, and help to enable us to persevere if we are enjoying His friendship. To this throne we must always have recourse with confidence; that is to say, with that trust which springs from faith in the goodness and truth of God, Who has promised to hear him who prays to Him with confidence, but with a confidence that is both sure and stable. On the other hand, says St. James, let not the man who prays with hesitation think that he will receive any-

thing : *For he who wavereth is like a wave of the sea which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord*—(James i. 6). He will receive nothing, because the diffidence which agitates him is unjust towards God, and will hinder His Mercy from listening to his prayers : "Thou hast not asked rightly, because thou hast asked doubtingly," says St. Basil; thou hast not received grace, because thou hast asked it without confidence. David says that our confidence in God ought to be as firm as a mountain, that is, not moved by every gust of wind : *They who trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Sion; he shall not be moved forever*—(Ps. cxxiv. 1). And it is this that Our Lord recommends to us, if we wish to obtain the graces which we ask : *Whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you*—(Mark xi. 24). Whatever grace you require, be sure that it will be given to you, and so you shall obtain it.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity hopeth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

In this manner the soul is wholly united to God in Heaven, and loves Him with all her strength; her love is most perfect and complete, and though necessarily finite, since a creature is not capable of infinite love, it nevertheless renders her perfectly happy and contented, so

that she desires nothing more. On the other hand, Almighty God communicates Himself, and unites Himself wholly to the soul, filling her with Himself proportionately to her merits; and this union is not merely by means only of His gifts, lights, and loving attractions, as is the case during the present life, but by His own very Essence. As fire penetrates iron, and seems to change it into itself, so does God penetrate the soul and fill her with Himself; and though she never loses her own being, yet she becomes so penetrated and absorbed by that immense ocean of the Divine substance that she remains, as it were, annihilated, and as if she ceased to exist. The Apostle prayed for this happy lot for his disciples when he said: *That you may be filled unto all the fulness of God*—(Eph. iii. 19).

II.

And this is the end which the goodness of God has appointed for us in the life to come. Hence the soul can never enjoy perfect repose on earth; because it is only in Heaven that she can obtain perfect union with God. It is true that the lovers of Jesus Christ find peace in the practice of perfect conformity with the will of God; but they cannot in this life find complete repose. This is only obtained when our last end is obtained; that is, when we see God face to face, and are consumed with His Divine love; but until the soul has reached this end, she is ill at ease, and groans and sighs, saying: *Behold, in peace is my bitterness most bitter*—(Ps. xxxviii. 17).

Thursday—Seventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

Picture to yourself the state to which you will be reduced when death comes, and you are in your last agony, and scarcely another hour of life remains. You are about to appear before your Judge, Jesus Christ, to give an account of your whole life. Nothing in that hour will alarm you so much as a bad conscience. Put your accounts in order, therefore, before the coming of that great accounting day.

I.

Picture to yourself the state to which you will be reduced when death comes, and you are in your last agony, and scarcely another hour of life remains. You are about to appear before your Judge, Jesus Christ, to give an account of your whole life. Nothing in that hour will alarm you so much as a bad conscience. Put your accounts in order, therefore, before the coming of that great accounting day.

When you are on the point of entering into Eternity, remorse for past sins, diffidence, increased by the suggestions of the devil, and uncertainty as to your future lot —oh, how all this will cast the soul into a tempest of confusion and fear! Let us therefore now unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, and to Mary, that at that decisive moment they may not abandon us.

How terrified shall we be at the thought that in a few moments we shall be judged by Jesus Christ! St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, being ill, was asked by her director why she trembled, and she answered: "How terrible is

the thought of having to appear before Christ as our Judge!"

O Jesus, remember that I am one of those whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Blood. *We beseech thee, therefore, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood!*

It is the common opinion among divines that in the same place and at the very moment in which the soul departs it is judged by Jesus Christ. So that at one and the same moment the trial is gone through and the sentence passed and put into execution.

O fatal moment, in which the lot of each one is decided for a happy or a miserable Eternity!

The Venerable Father da Ponte, when he considered the Judgment, trembled to such a degree as to shake the room in which he was.

O Jesus, if Thou wert to judge me now, what would become of me? Eternal Father, *look upon the face of thy Christ*—(Ps. lxxxiii. 10). I sincerely repent of all the sins I have committed against Thee; look on the Blood, the Wounds of Thy Son, and have pity on me!

II.

The soul goes forth and leaves the body, but sometimes it is still doubtful whether the person is alive or dead. The soul enters Eternity. The priest sprinkles the corpse with holy water and repeats the prayer of the Church: "Come to his assistance, all ye Saints of God; meet him, ye Angels of the Lord." But if the soul be lost, the Saints and Angels can no longer assist it.

Jesus will come to judge us appearing with the same Wounds that He received for us in His Passion. These Wounds will be a source of great consolation to penitents, who with sorrow shall have bewailed their sins during life, but will be a source of great terror to sinners who shall have died in their sins.

O God, what anguish for a man to behold Jesus for the first time, and as his indignant Judge! It will be more terrible than hell itself.

Man will then behold the majesty of the Judge; he will see how much He suffered for his love; he will see

God's many mercies towards him, the many and great means He afforded him of working out his salvation; he will see the vanity of all worldly things, and the greatness of those which are eternal; he will see, in a word, all these truths, but—too late! Then there will be no more time to repair past errors. What is done is done.

My beloved Redeemer, grant that when I first behold Thee, I may find Thee appeased; and for this end give me now light and strength to reform my life. I desire to love Thee always. If hitherto I have despised Thy graces, I now esteem them above all the kingdoms of the world.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

IV.—CONFIDENCE; THE FOUNDATION OF ONE'S CONFIDENCE.

But, some one will say, on what am I, a miserable sinner, to found this certain confidence of obtaining what I ask? On what? On the promise made by Jesus Christ: *Ask, and you shall receive*—(Jo. xvi. 24). "Who will fear to be deceived, when the Truth promises?" says St. Augustine. How can we doubt that we shall be heard, when God, Who is Truth itself, promises to give us that which we ask of Him in Prayer? "We should not be exhorted to ask," says the same Father, "unless He meant to give." This is the very thing to which He exhorts us so strongly, and which is repeated so often in the Scriptures—*pray, ask, seek,* and you shall obtain what you desire: *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). And in order that we may pray to Him with due confidence our Saviour has taught us, in the "Our Father," that when we have recourse to Him for the graces necessary for salvation (all of which are included in the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer) we should call Him, not *Lord,*

but *Father—Our Father*—because it is His will that we should ask God for grace with the same confidence with which a son, when in want, or sick, asks food or medicine from his own father. If a son is suffering hunger, he has only to make his case known to his father and his father will forthwith provide him with food; and if he has received a bite from a venomous serpent, he has only to show his father the wound, and the father will immediately apply whatever remedy he has.

Trusting, therefore, in God's promises, let us always pray with confidence; not vacillating, but stable and firm, as the Apostle says : *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering : for he is faithful that hath promised*—(Heb. x. 23). As it is perfectly certain that God is faithful to His promises, so ought our confidence also be perfectly certain that He will hear us when we pray. And although sometimes, when we are in a state of aridity, or disturbed by some fault we have committed, we perhaps do not feel while praying that sensible confidence which we would wish to experience, yet, for all this, let us force ourselves to pray, and to pray without ceasing, for God will not refuse us. Nay, rather He will hear us more readily, because we shall then pray with more distrust of ourselves, and confiding only in the goodness and faithfulness of God, Who has promised to hear the man who prays to Him. Oh, how God is pleased in the time of our tribulations, of our fears, and of our temptations to see us *hope against hope*; that is, in spite of the feeling of diffidence which we then experience because of our desolation! This is what the Apostle praised in the Patriarch Abraham, *who against hope believed in hope*—(Rom. iv. 18).

St. John says that he who reposes a firm trust in God will certainly become a saint : *And every one that hath this hope in him sanctifieth himself, as he also is holy* —(1 Jo. iii. 3). For God gives abundant graces to them that trust in Him. By this confidence it was that so many Martyrs and Virgins, and even children, in spite of the dread of the torments which their persecutors

prepared for them, overcame both their tortures and their persecutors.

Sometimes, I say, we pray, but it seems to us that God will not hear us. Ah! let us not then neglect to persevere in Prayer and to hope; let us then say with Job: *Although he should kill me, I will trust in him*—(Job xiii. 15). O my God! though Thou shouldst drive me from Thy presence, I will not cease to pray, and to hope in Thy Mercy. Let us do so, and we shall obtain what we want from God. So did the Canaanitish woman, and she obtained all that she wished from Jesus Christ. This woman had a daughter possessed of a devil, and prayed our Saviour to deliver her: *Have mercy on me, my daughter is grievously tormented by a devil*—(Matt. xv. 22). Our Lord answered her that He was not sent for the Gentiles, of whom she was one, but for the Jews. She, however, did not lose heart, but renewed her prayer with confidence: Lord, Thou canst console me! Thou must console me. *Lord help me*!—(Matt. xv. 25). Jesus answered: *It is not good to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs.*—(Matt. xv. 26). But she replied: *Yea, Lord; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters*—(Matt. xv. 27). Then our Saviour, seeing the great confidence of this woman, praised her, and did what she asked, saying: *O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt*—(Matt. xv. 28). For who, says Ecclesiasticus has ever called on God for aid, and has been neglected and left unaided by Him? *Or who hath called upon him and he hath despised him?* —(Ecclus. ii. 12).

St. Augustine says that Prayer is *a key which opens heaven to us;* the same moment in which our Prayer ascends to God, the grace which we ask for descends to us: "The Prayer of the just *is the key of heaven; the* petition ascends, and the mercy of God descends." The royal Prophet says that our supplications and God's Mercy are united together: *Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me*—(Ps. lxv. 20. And hence the same St. Augustine says that

when we are praying to God we ought to be certain that God is listening to us : " When you see that your prayer is not removed from you, be sure that His Mercy is not removed from you." And for myself, I speak the truth, I never feel greater consolation nor a greater confidence of my salvation than when I am praying to God, and recommending myself to Him. And I think that the same thing happens to all other believers. All the other signs of our salvation are uncertain and unstable, but that God hears the man who prays to Him with confidence is an infallible truth, as it is infallible that God cannot fail in His promises.

When we find ourselves weak and unable to overcome any passion, or any great difficulty in fulfilling that which God requires of us, let us take courage and say, with the Apostle : *I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me*—(Philip. iv. 13). Let us not say, as some do : *I cannot; I distrust myself.* With *our own strength* certainly *we can do nothing;* but with *God's help* we *can do everything.* If God said to some one : Take this mountain on your shoulders and carry it, for I am helping you, would not the man be a fool or impious if he answered : I will not take it, for I have not strength to carry it? And thus, when we know how miserable and weak we are and when we find ourselves most encompassed with temptations, let us not lose heart, but let us lift up our eyes to God, and say, with David : *The Lord is my helper; and I will despise my enemies.*—(Ps. cxvii. 7). With the help of my Lord, I shall overcome and laugh to scorn all the assaults of my foes. And when we find ourselves in danger of offending God, or in any other critical position, and are too confused to know what is best to be done, let us recommend ourselves to God, saying : *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*—(Ps. xxvi. 1). And let us be sure that God will then certainly give us light, and will save us from every evil.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity hopeth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST HOPES FOR ALL THINGS FROM HIM.

I.

Yes, O my God, I live in peace in this valley of tears, because such is Thy will; but I cannot help feeling unspeakable bitterness at finding myself at a distance from Thee, and not yet perfectly united with Thee, Who art my centre, my All, and the fulness of my repose! For this reason the Saints, though they were all inflamed with the love of God, did nothing but sigh after Paradise. David cried out: *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!*—(Ps. cxiv. 5). *I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear*—(Ps. xvi. 15). St. Paul said of himself: *Having a desire to be with Christ*—(Phil. i. 23). St. Francis of Assisi said:

"I look for such a meed of bliss
That all my pain seems happiness."

These were all so many acts of perfect Charity. The angelic Doctor teaches us that the highest degree of Charity which a soul can reach upon this earth is to desire intensely to go and be united with God, and to enjoy Him in Heaven. But, as we have already seen, this enjoyment of God in Heaven does not consist so much in the fruition of the delights there lavished on her by Almighty God, as in the pleasure she takes in the happiness of God Himself Whom she loves incomparably more than herself.

O God, my Creator and my Redeemer, Thou hast created me for Heaven; Thou hast redeemed me from

hell to bring me into Heaven; and I have so many times, in Thy very face, renounced my claim to Heaven by my sins, and have remained contented in seeing myself doomed to hell! But blessed for ever be Thy infinite mercy, which, I hope, has pardoned me, and many a time rescued me from perdition. Ah, my Jesus, would that I had never offended Thee! Would that I had always loved Thee! I rejoice that at least I have still time to do so. I love Thee! O Love of my soul, I love Thee with my whole heart; I love Thee more than myself! I see plainly that Thou wishest to save me, that I may be able to love Thee for all eternity in that kingdom of love. I thank Thee, and beseech Thee to help me for the remainder of my life, in which I wish to love Thee most ardently, that I may ardently love Thee in eternity.

II.

The Holy Souls in Purgatory feel no pain more acutely than that of their yearning to possess God, from Whom they remain still at a distance. And this sort of pain will afflict those especially who in their lifetime had but little desire of Paradise. Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine also says that there is a certain place in Purgatory called *carcer honoratus,* or *prison of honour,* where certain souls are not tormented with any pains of sense, but merely with the pain of privation of the sight of God. Examples of this are related by St. Gregory, Venerable Bede, St. Vincent Ferrar, and St. Bridget; and this punishment is not for the commission of sin, but for coldness in desiring Heaven. Many souls aspire to perfection, but for the rest, they are very indifferent whether they go to enjoy the sight of God or continue on earth. But eternal life is an inestimable good that has been purchased by the death of Jesus Christ; and God punishes such souls as have been remiss during life in their desires to obtain it.

Ah, my Jesus, when will the day arrive that shall free me from all danger of losing Thee, and consume me with love, by unveiling before my eyes Thy infinite beauty, so that I shall be under the necessity of loving

Thee? Oh, sweet necessity! Oh, happy and dear and most desired necessity, which shall relieve me from all fear of evermore displeasing Thee, and shall oblige me to love Thee with all my strength! My conscience alarms me, and says: "How canst thou presume to enter Heaven?" But, my dearest Redeemer, Thy merits are all my hope. O Mary, Queen of Heaven, thy intercession is all-powerful with God; in thee I put my trust!

Friday—Seventh Week after Pentecost

(First Friday of July).

Morning Meditation

THE AMIABLE HEART OF JESUS.

The Heart of Jesus is all pure, all holy, all full of love towards God and towards us. Every perfection, every virtue reigns in this Heart. This is the Heart in which God Himself finds all His delight. O amiable Heart of Jesus, Thou dost well deserve the love of all hearts.

I.

He who shows himself amiable in everything must necessarily make himself loved. Oh, if we only applied ourselves to discover all the good qualities by which Jesus Christ renders Himself worthy of our love, we should all be under the happy necessity of loving Him. And what heart among all hearts can be found more

worthy of love than the Heart of Jesus Christ? A Heart all pure, all holy, all full of love towards God and towards us; because all Its desires are for the Divine glory and our good. This is the Heart in which God finds all His delight. Every perfection, every virtue reigns in this Heart;—a most ardent love for God, His Father, united to the greatest humility and respect that can possibly exist; a sovereign confusion for our sins, which He has taken upon Himself, united to the extreme confidence of a most affectionate Son; a sovereign abhorrence of our sins, united to a lively compassion for our miseries; an extreme sorrow, united to a perfect conformity to the Will of God; so that in Jesus is found everything that is most amiable.

O my amiable Redeemer, what object more worthy of love could the Eternal Father command me to love than Thee? Thou art the Beauty of Paradise, Thou art the Love of Thy Father, Thy Heart is the throne of all virtues. O amiable Heart of my Jesus, Thou dost well deserve the love of all hearts; poor and wretched is that heart which loves Thee not! Thus miserable, O my God, has my heart been during all the time in which it has not loved Thee. But I will not continue to be thus wretched; I love Thee, I will always continue to love Thee, O my Jesus. O my Lord, I have hitherto forgotten Thee, and now what can I expect? That my ingratitude will oblige Thee to forget me entirely and forsake me forever? No, my Saviour, do not permit it. Thou art the object of the love of God; and shalt Thou not, then, be loved by a miserable sinner such as I am, who have been so favoured and loved by Thee? O lovely flames that burn in the amiable Heart of my Jesus, enkindle in my poor heart that holy fire which Jesus came down from Heaven to kindle on earth. Consume and destroy all the impure affections that dwell in my heart and prevent it from being entirely His.

II.

Some are attracted to love others by their beauty, others by their innocence, others by living with them,

others by devotion. But if there were a person in whom all these and other virtues were united, who could help loving him? If we heard that there was in a distant foreign country a prince who was handsome, humble, courteous, devout, full of charity, affable to all, who rendered good to those who did him evil; then, although we knew not who he was, and though he knew not us, and though we were not acquainted with him, nor was there any possibility of our ever being so, yet we should be enamoured of him, and should be constrained to love him. How is it, then, possible that Jesus Christ, Who possesses in Himself all these virtues, and in the most perfect degree, and Who loves us so tenderly, how is it possible that He should be so little loved by men, and should not be the only object of our love? O my God, how is it that Jesus, Who alone is worthy of love, and Who has given us so many proofs of the love that He bears us, should be alone, as it were, the unlucky One with us, Who cannot succeed in making us love Him; as if He were not sufficiently worthy of our love! This is what caused floods of tears to St. Rose of Lima, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Teresa, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, who, on considering the ingratitude of men, exclaimed, weeping: "Love is not loved! Love is not loved!"

O my God, grant that I may exist only to love Thee, and Thee alone, my dearest Saviour! If at one time I despised Thee, Thou art now the only object of my love. I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, and I will never love any but Thee! My beloved Lord, do not disdain to accept the love of a heart which has once afflicted Thee by its sins. Let it be Thy glory to exhibit to the Angels a heart now burning with the love of Thee, which hitherto shunned and despised Thee. Most holy Virgin Mary, my hope, do thou assist me, and beseech Jesus to make me, by His grace, all that He wishes me to be.

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Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

V.—THE PRAYER OF SINNERS.

But I am a sinner, you will say, and in the Scriptures I read : *God doth not hear sinners*—(Jo. ix. 31). St. Thomas answers, with St. Augustine : " That is the word of a blind man not yet perfectly enlightened, and therefore it is not authoritative." Besides, St. Thomas adds, it is true of the petition which the sinner makes, " so far as he is a sinner," that is, when he asks from a desire of continuing to sin; as, for instance, if he were to ask assistance to enable him to take revenge on his enemy, or to execute any other bad intention. The same holds good for the sinner who prays God to save him, but has no desire to quit the state of sin. There are some unhappy persons who love the chains with which the devil keeps them bound like slaves. The prayers of such men are not heard by God, because they are rash and abominable. For what greater temerity can there be than for a man to ask favours of a prince whom he not only has often offended, but whom he intends to offend still more? And this is the meaning of the Holy Spirit, when He says that the Prayer of him who turns away his ears so as not to hear what God commands is destestable and odious to God : *He who turneth away his ears from learning the law, his prayer shall be an abomination*—(Prov. xxviii. 9). To these people God says : You need not pray to Me, for I will turn My eyes from you, and will not hear you : *When you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away my eyes from you; and when you multiply prayer, I will not hear*—(Is. i. 15). Such, precisely, was the prayer of the impious King Antiochus, who prayed to God, and made great promises, but insincerely, and with a heart

obstinate in sin; the sole object of his Prayer being to escape the punishment that impended over him; therefore God did not hear his Prayer, but caused him to die devoured by worms: *Then this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not like to obtain mercy*—(2 Mach. ix. 13).

But there are others who sin through frailty, or by the violence of some great passion, and who groan under the yoke of the enemy, and desire to break the chains of death and to escape from their miserable slavery, and for this they ask the assistance of God—the Prayer of these, if it is persevering, will certainly be heard by God Who says: *For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth*—(Matt. vii. 8). "Every one, whether he be *a just man* or *a sinner*," says the Author of the *Opus Imperfectum*. And in St. Luke, our Lord, when speaking of the man who gave all the loaves he had to his friend, not so much on account of his friendship as because of the other's importunity, says: *If he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And so I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you*—(Luke xi. 8, 9). So that persevering Prayer obtains Mercy from God, even for those who are not His friends. "That which is not obtained through friendship," says St. Chrysostom, "is obtained by Prayer." He even says that Prayer is valued more by God than friendship: "Friendship is not of such avail with God as Prayer; that which is not effected by friendship is effected by Prayer." And St. Basil doubts not that even sinners obtain what they ask, if they persevere in praying: "Sinners obtain what they seek, if they seek perseveringly." St. Gregory says the same: "The sinner shall also cry, and his Prayer shall reach to God." So, likewise, St. Jerome, who says that even the sinner can call God his Father, if he prays to Him to receive him back as a son, after the example of the Prodigal Son, who called Him Father: *Father, I have sinned*—(Luke xv. 21), even though he had not as yet

been pardoned. And St. Augustine : " If God does not hear sinners, in vain would that Publican have said, *God be merciful to me, a sinner*"—(Luke xviii. 13). But the Gospel assures us that the Publican did by his Prayer obtain forgiveness : *This man went down into his house justified*—(Luke xviii. 14).

But St. Thomas, who examines this point more minutely than others, does not hesitate to affirm that even a sinner is heard if he prays; for though his Prayer *is not meritorious,* yet *it has the power of impetration* —that is, of obtaining what is asked; because impetration is not founded on God's justice, but on His goodness. " Merit," he says, " depends on justice; impetration, on grace." Thus did Daniel pray : *Incline, O my God, thine ear and hear . . . For it is not for our justifications do we present our prayers before thy face, but for the multitude of thy mercies*—(Dan. ix. 18). Therefore, when we pray, says St. Thomas, it is not necessary to be the friends of God in order to obtain the grace we ask for : " Prayer itself makes us of the family of God." Moreover, St. Bernard uses a beautiful explanation of this, saying that the Prayer of a sinner to escape from sin arises from the desire to return to the grace of God. Now this desire is a gift which is certainly given by no other than God Himself. " To what end, therefore," says St. Bernard, " would God give to a sinner this holy desire, unless He meant to hear him?" And indeed, in the Holy Scriptures themselves there are multitudes of instances of sinners who have been delivered from sin by Prayer. Thus was King Achab delivered; thus King Manasses; thus King Nabuchodonosor; and thus the good Thief. O wonderful thing, the mighty power of Prayer ! Two sinners are dying on Calvary by the side of Jesus Christ : one, because he prays, *Remember me,* is saved ! The other, because he does not pray is damned !

And, in fine, St. Chrysostom says, " No man has with sorrow asked favours from Him without obtaining what he wished." But why should we cite more authorities, and give more reasons to demonstrate this point, when

our Lord Himself says : *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you*—(Matt. xi. 28). The *burdened,* according to Saints Augustine, Jerome, and others, are sinners in general, who groan under the load of their sins, and who, if they have recourse to God, will surely, according to His promise, be refreshed and saved by His grace. Ah, we cannot desire to be pardoned so much as He longs to pardon us. " Thou dost not," says St. Chrysostom, " so much desire thy sins to be forgiven as He desires to forgive thy sins." And he goes on to say : " There is nothing which Prayer cannot obtain, though a man were guilty of a thousand sins, provided it be fervent and unremitting." And let us mark well the words of St. James : *If any of you wanteth wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not*—(James i. 5). All those, therefore, who pray to God, are infallibly heard by Him, and receive grace in abundance : *He giveth to all abundantly.* But you should particularly remark the words which follow, *and upbraideth not.* This means that God does not do as men, who, when a person that has formerly done them an injury comes to ask a favour, immediately upbraid him with his offence. God does not do so to the man who prays, even though he were the greatest sinner in the world, when he asks for some grace conducive to his eternal salvation. Then He does not upbraid him with the offences he has committed; but, as though he had never displeased Him, He instantly receives him, He consoles him, He hears him, and enriches him with an abundance of His gifts. To crown all, our Saviour, in order to encourage us to pray says : *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you*—(Jo. xvi. 23). As though He had said : *Courage, O sinners, do not despair; do not let your sins turn you away from having recourse to My Father, and from hoping to be saved by Him if you desire it. You have not now any merits to obtain the graces which you ask for, for you only deserve to be punished; still do this : go to My Father in My Name, through My merits ask*

all the favours you want, and I promise and swear to you—Amen, amen, I say to you (which according to St. Augustine is a species of oath) *that whatever you ask, My Father will grant.* O God, what greater comfort can a sinner have after his fall than to know for certain that whatever he asks from God in the Name of Jesus Christ will be given to him!

I say *all,* but I mean only that which has reference to his eternal salvation, for with respect to temporal goods, we have already shown that God, even when asked, sometimes does not give them, because He sees that they would injure the soul. But so far as relates to spiritual goods, His promise to hear us is not conditional, but absolute; and therefore St. Augustine tells us that those things which God promises absolutely we should demand with absolute certainty of receiving. And how, says the Saint, can God ever deny us anything, when we ask Him for it with confidence? How much more does He not desire to dispense to us graces than we to receive them! "He is more willing to be munificent in His benefits to thee than thou art desirous to receive them."

St. Chrysostom says that the only time when God is angry with us is when we neglect to ask Him for His gifts: "He is only angry when we do not pray." And how can it ever happen that God will not hear a soul who asks Him for what is according to His own Heart? When the soul says to Him: Lord, I ask Thee not for goods of this world,—riches, pleasures, honours; I ask Thee only for Thy grace: deliver me from sin, grant me a good death, give me Paradise, give me Thy holy love (which is the grace which St. Francis de Sales says we should seek more than all others), give me resignation to Thy will; how is it possible that God should not hear? What petitions wilt Thou, O my God, ever hear, says St. Augustine, if Thou dost not hear those which are made after Thy own Heart? But, above all, our confidence ought to revive when we pray to God for spiritual graces, as Jesus Christ says: *If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,*

how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him!—(Luke xi. 13). If you, who are so attached to your own interests, so full of self-love, cannot refuse your children that which they ask, how much more will your heavenly Father, Who loves you better than any earthly father, grant you His spiritual goods when you pray for them!

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

It is not the pains of poverty, of sickness, of dishonour and persecution which in this life most afflict souls that love God, but temptation and desolation of spirit. Whilst a soul is in the enjoyment of the loving presence of God, she is so far from grieving at all the afflictions and outrages of men that she is rather comforted by them, as they afford her an opportunity of showing God a token of her love; they serve, in short, as fuel to enkindle her love more and more. But to find herself solicited by temptations to forfeit the Divine grace, or in the hour of desolation to dread having already lost it—oh, these are torments too cruel to bear for one who loves Jesus Christ with all her heart! However, the same love supplies her with strength to endure all patiently, and to pursue the way of perfection, on which she has entered. And oh, what progress do those souls make by means of these trials which God is pleased to send them in order to prove their love!

II.

Temptations are the most grievous trials that can happen to a soul that loves Jesus Christ; she accepts with resignation of every other evil, as calculated only to bind her in closer union with God; but temptations to commit sin would drive her, as we said above, to a separation from Jesus Christ, and on this account they are more intolerable to her than all other afflictions. We must know, however, that although no temptation to evil can ever come from God, but only from the devil or our own corrupt inclinations: *For God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man*—(James i. 13); nevertheless, God does at times permit His most cherished souls to be the most grievously tempted. And in the first place, in order that from temptation the soul may better learn her own weakness, and the need she has of the Divine assistance not to fall. Whilst a soul is favoured with heavenly consolations, she feels as if she were able to vanquish every assault of the enemy, and to achieve every undertaking for the glory of God. But when she is strongly tempted, and is almost reeling on the edge of the precipice, and just ready to fall, then she becomes better acquainted with her own misery and with her inability to resist, if God does not come to her rescue. So it fared with St. Paul, who tells us that God had suffered him to be troubled with a temptation to sensual pleasure in order to keep him humble after the revelations with which God has favoured him: *And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me*—(2 Cor. xii. 7).

Saturday—Seventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MARY IS THE HOPE OF SINNERS.

One of the titles which is the most encouraging for poor sinners and under which the Church teaches us to invoke Mary, in the Litany of Loretto, is that of "Refuge of sinners." Therefore a devout author exhorts all sinners to take refuge under the mantle of Mary : " Fly, O Adam and Eve, and all you, their children, who have outraged God, fly and take refuge in the bosom of this good Mother, for know you not that she is your only city of refuge?"

I.

In the first Chapter of the Book of Genesis we read that *God made two great lights; a greater light to rule the day; a lesser light to rule the night*—(Gen. i. 16). Cardinal Hugo says that " Christ is the greater light to rule the just, and Mary the lesser to rule sinners"; meaning that the sun is a figure of Jesus Christ, Whose light is enjoyed by the just who live in the clear day of Divine grace; and that the moon is a figure of Mary, by whose means those who are in the night of sin are enlightened. Since Mary is this auspicious luminary, and is so for the benefit of poor sinners, should any one have been so unfortunate as to fall into the night of sin, what is he to do? Innocent III replies, " Whoever is in the night of sin, let him cast his eyes on the moon, let him implore Mary." Since he has lost the light of the sun of justice by losing the grace of God, let him turn to the moon, and beseech Mary; and she will certainly give him light to see the misery of his state, and strength to leave

it without delay. St. Methodius says that "by the prayers of Mary well nigh countless sinners are converted."

II.

One of the titles which is the most encouraging to poor sinners, and under which the Church teaches us to invoke Mary, in the Litany of Loretto, is that of "Refuge of Sinners." In Judea in ancient times there were cities of refuge in which criminals who fled there for protection were exempt from the punishments which they had deserved. Nowadays those cities are not so numerous; there is but one, and that is Mary, of whom the Psalmist says: *Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God*—(Ps. lxxxvi. 3). But this city differs from the ancient ones in this respect—that in these ancient cities all kinds of criminals did not find refuge, nor was the protection extended to every class of crime; but under the mantle of Mary all sinners, without exception, find mercy for every sin that they may have committed, provided only that they go there to seek this protection. "I am the city of refuge," says St. John Damascene, in the name of our Queen, "to all who fly to me." And it is sufficient to have recourse to her, for whoever has the good fortune to enter this city need not speak to be saved. *Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the fenced city, and let us be silent there*—(Jer. viii. 14), to speak in the words of the Prophet Jeremias. This city, says Blessed Albert the Great, is the most holy Virgin fenced in with grace and glory. *And let us be silent there*, that is, continues an interpreter, "because we dare not invoke the Lord, whom we have offended, she will invoke and ask." For if we do not presume to ask our Lord to forgive us, it will suffice to enter this city and be silent, for Mary will speak and ask all we may require. And for this reason a devout author exhorts all sinners to take refuge under the mantle of Mary, exclaiming: "Fly, O Adam and Eve, and all you, their children, who have outraged God; fly, and take refuge in the bosom of this Good Mother; know you not that she is our only city of refuge?"—the only hope of sinners.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER, CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

VI.—PERSEVERANCE.

Our Prayers, then, must be humble and confident; but this is not enough to obtain final perseverance, and thereby eternal life. Individual prayers will obtain the individual graces which they ask of God; but *unless they are persevering, they will not obtain final perseverance,* which, as it is the accumulation of many graces, requires many Prayers that are not to cease till death. *The grace of salvation is not a single grace, but a chain of graces, all of which are at last linked with the grace of final perseverance.* Now, *to this chain of graces* there ought to correspond *another chain* (*as it were*) *of our prayers;* if we, by neglecting to pray, *break the chain of our prayers,* the *chain of graces* will be broken too; and as it is by this that we have to obtain salvation, we shall not be saved.

It is true that *we cannot merit* final Perseverance, as the Council of Trent teaches: "It cannot be had from any other source but from Him Who is able to confirm the man who is standing, that he may stand with perseverance." Nevertheless, says St. Augustine, this great gift of Perseverance *can in a manner be merited by our prayers;* that is, can be obtained by praying: "This gift, therefore, can be *suppliantly merited* (*suppliciter emereri potest*), that is, can be obtained by supplication." And Father Suarez adds that the man who prays infallibly obtains it. But to obtain it, and to save ourselves, says St. Thomas, a persevering and continual Prayer is necessary: "After Baptism continual Prayer is necessary to a man in order that he may enter Heaven." And before this our Saviour Himself had told us over and over again: *We*

ought always to pray, and not to faint—(Luke xviii. 1). *Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man*—(Luke xxi. 36). The same had been previously said in the Old Testament: *Let nothing hinder thee from praying always*—(Ecclus. xviii. 22). *Bless God at all times, and desire him to direct thy ways*—(Tob. iv. 20). Hence the Apostle inculcated on his disciples never to neglect Prayer: *Pray without ceasing*—(1 Thess. v. 17). *Be instant in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving*—(Col. iv. 2). *I will, therefore, that men pray in every place*—(1 Tim. ii. 8). God does indeed wish to give us Perseverance, says St. Nilus, but He will only give it to him who prays for it perseveringly: "He willeth to confer benefits on him who perseveres in prayer." Many sinners by the help of God's grace come to be converted, and to receive pardon. But then, because they neglect to ask for perseverance, they fall again, and lose all.

Nor is it enough, says Bellarmine, to ask the grace of Perseverance *once*, or a *few times*; we ought always to ask it, every day till our death, if we wish to obtain it: "It must *be asked* day by day, that it may *be obtained* day by day." He who asks it one day, obtains it for that one day; but if he does not ask it the next day, the next day he will fall.

And this is the lesson which our Lord wished to teach us in the Parable of the man who would not give the loaves to his friend who asked him for them, until he had become importunate in his demand: *Although he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth*—(Luke xi. 8). Now if this man, solely to deliver himself from the troublesome importunity of his friend, gave him even against his own will the loaves for which he asked, "how much more," says St. Augustine, "will the good God give, Who both commands us to ask, and is angry if we ask not!" God, then, does indeed wish to give us eternal life, and therein all graces; but He wishes also

that we should never omit to ask Him for them, even to the extent of being troublesome. Cornelius à Lapide says on the text just quoted, "God wishes us to be persevering in Prayer to the extent of importunity." Men of the world cannot bear the importunate; but God not only bears with them, but wishes us to be importunate in praying to Him for graces, and especially for Perseverance. St. Gregory says that "God wills to be called upon, He wills to be forced, He wills to be conquered by importunity . . . Happy violence, by which God is not offended, but appeased!"

So that to obtain Perseverance we must always recommend ourselves to God morning and night, at Meditation, at Mass, at Communion, at all times; especially in time of temptation, when we must keep repeating: *Lord, help me! Lord, assist me! Keep Thy hand upon me; leave me not; have pity upon me!* Is there anything easier than to say: *Lord, help me, assist me!* The Psalmist says: *With me is prayer to the God of my life*—(Ps. xli. 9). On which the *Gloss* is as follows: "A man may say, I cannot fast, I cannot give alms; but if he is told to pray, he dare not say I cannot." For there is nothing easier than to pray. But we must never cease praying; we must (so to speak) continually do violence to God, that He may assist us always—a violence which is delightful and dear to Him. "This violence is agreeable to God," says Tertullian; and St. Jerome says that the more persevering and importunate our Prayers are, so much the more are they acceptable to God: "Prayer, even though it is importunate, is more acceptable."

Blesseth is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates—(Prov. viii. 34). Happy is that man, says God, who listens to Me, and watches continually with holy prayers at the gates of My Mercy. And Isaias says: *Blessed are all they that wait for him*—(Is. xxx. 18). Blessed are they who till the end wait (in Prayer) for their salvation from God. Therefore in the Gospel Jesus Christ exhorts us to pray; but how? *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall*

find; knock, and it shall be opened to you—(Luke xi. 9). Would it not have been enough to have said, *ask*? Why add *seek* and *knock*? No, it was not superfluous to add them; for thereby our Saviour wished us to understand that we ought to do as the poor who go begging. If they do not receive the alms they *ask*, they do not cease asking; they return to *ask again*; and if the master of the house does not show himself any more, they set to work *to knock* at the door till they become troublesome. That is what God wishes us to do: *to pray*, and *to pray again*, and *never leave off praying*, that He would assist us and succour us, that He would enlighten us and strengthen us, and never allow us to forfeit His grace. The learned Lessius says that the man cannot be excused from mortal sin who does not pray when he is in sin, or in danger of death; or, again, if he neglects to pray for any notable time, as (he says) for one or two months, but this is not understood to refer to the time of temptations; because whoever finds himself *assailed by any grievous temptation without doubt sins mortally if he does not have recourse to God at once*, to ask for assistance to resist it; seeing that otherwise he places himself in a proximate, nay, in a certain occasion of sin.

But some one will say: Since God can give and wishes to give me the grace of Perseverance, why does He not give it to me all at once, when I ask Him?

The Holy Fathers assign many reasons. God does not grant it at once, but delays it:

(1) That He may *prove our confidence*.

(2) And, further, says St. Augustine, that *we may long for it more vehemently*. Great gifts, he says, should be greatly desired; for good things soon obtained are not held in the same estimation as those which have been long looked for: "God wills not to give quickly, that you may learn to have great desire for great things; for things long desired are all the more pleasant when obtained; but things soon given are cheapened."

(3) Again, the Lord does so *that we may not forget Him;* if we were already secure of persevering and of

being saved, and if we had not the continual need of God's help to preserve us in His grace and to save us, we should soon forget God. Want makes the poor keep resorting to the houses of the rich; so God, to draw us to Himself, as St. Chrysostom says, and to see us often at His feet, in order that He may thus be able to do us greater good, delays giving us the complete grace of salvation till the hour of our death: "It is not because He rejects our prayers that He delays, but by this contrivance He wishes to make us careful, and to draw us to Himself." Again, He does so in order that we, by persevering in Prayer, may unite ourselves closer to Him with the sweet bonds of love: "Prayer," says the same St. Chrysostom, "which accustoms us to converse with God, is no slight bond of love with Him." This continual recourse to God in Prayer, and this confident expectation of the graces we desire—oh, what a great incentive to inflame us with love, and what a firm chain to bind us more closely to God!

But how long have we to pray? *Always,* says the same Saint, *till we receive favourable sentence of eternal life*: that is to say, *till our death*: "Do not leave off till you receive." And he adds: "If you say, I will not give up till I have received, you will assuredly receive." The Apostle writes that many run for the prize, but that he only receives it *who runs till he wins*: *Know you not that they who run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain*—(1 Cor. ix. 24). It is not, then, enough for salvation to simply pray; but we must pray always, that we may at last receive the crown which God promises, but promises only to those who are constant in Prayer till the end.

So that if we wish to be saved, we must do as David did, who always kept his eyes turned to God, to implore His aid against being overcome by his enemies: *My eyes are ever towards the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare*—(Ps. xxiv. 15). As the devil does not cease continually spreading snares to devour us, as St. Peter writes: *Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring*

lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour—(1 Pet. v. 8); so ought we ever to stand with our arms in our hands to defend ourselves against such a foe, and to say, with the royal Prophet, *I will pursue after my enemies; and I will not turn again till they are consumed*—(Ps. xvii. 38). I will never cease fighting till I see my enemies conquered. But how can we obtain this victory, so important for us and so difficult? "By most persevering prayers," says St. Augustine—only by prayers, and those most persevering; and till when? As long as the fight shall last. "As the battle is never over," says St. Bonaventure, "so let us never give over asking for Mercy." As we must be always in the combat, so should we be always asking God for aid not to be overcome. Woe, says the Wise Man, to him who in this battle leaves off praying: *Woe to them that have lost patience*—(Ecclus. ii. 16). We may be saved, the Apostle tells us, but on this condition, *if we hold fast the confidence and the glory of hope unto the end*—(Heb. iii. 6); if we are constant in praying with confidence until death.

Let us, then, take courage from the Mercy of God, and His promises, and say with the same Apostle: *Who, then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or danger, or persecution, or the sword?*—(Rom. viii. 35). Who shall succeed in estranging us from the love of Jesus Christ? Tribulation, perhaps or the danger of losing the goods of this world? The persecutions of devils or men? The torments inflicted by tyrants? *In all these we overcome* (it is St. Paul who encourages us), *because of Him that hath loved us*—(Rom. viii. 37). No, he says, no tribulation, no misery, danger, persecution, or torture, shall ever be able to separate us from the love of Jesus Christ; because with God's help we shall overcome all, if we fight for love of Him Who gave His life for us.

Father Hippolitus Durazzo, the day when he resolved to relinquish his dignity of prelate at Rome, and to give himself entirely to God by entering the Society of Jesus (which he afterwards did), was so afraid of being faith-

less by reason of his weakness that he said to God: "Forsake me not, Lord, now that I have given myself wholly to Thee! For pity's sake do not forsake me!" But he heard the whisper of God in his heart: "Rather should I say to thee: Do not *thou* forsake *Me*!" And so at last the servant of God, trusting in His goodness and help, concluded, "Then, O my God, Thou wilt not leave me, and I will not leave Thee."

Finally, if we wish not to be forsaken by God, we ought never cease praying to Him not to leave us. If we do this, He will certainly always assist us, and will never allow us to perish, or be separated from His love. And to this end let us not only take care always to ask for final Perseverance, and the graces necessary to obtain it, but let us, at the same time, always by anticipation, ask God for grace to go on praying; for this is precisely that great gift which He promised to His Elect by the mouth of the Prophet: *And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers*—(Zach. xii. 10). Oh, what a great grace is the spirit of Prayer; that is, the grace which God confers on a soul to enable it to pray always! Let us, then, never neglect to beg God to give us this grace, and this spirit of continual Prayer; because if we pray always, we shall certainly obtain from God Perseverance and every other gift which we desire, since His promise of hearing whoever prays to Him cannot fail. *For we are saved by hope*—(Rom. viii. 24). With this hope of always praying we may reckon ourselves saved. "Confidence," says the Venerable Bede, "will give us a broad entrance into this City." This hope will give us a safe passage into the City of Paradise.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

God permits temptations with a view to detach us more thoroughly from this life; and to kindle in us a desire to go and behold Him in Heaven. Hence pious souls, finding themselves attacked day and night by so many enemies, come at length to feel a loathing for life, and exclaim: "*Wo is me, that my sojourning is prolonged!*—(Ps. cxix. 5). And they sigh for the moment when they can say: *The snare is broken and we are delivered*—(Ps. cxxiii. 7). The soul would willingly wing her flight to God; but as long as she lives upon this earth she is bound by a snare which detains her here below, where she is continually assailed with temptations; this snare is only broken by death; so that the souls that love God sigh for death, which will deliver them from all danger of losing Him.

Almighty God, moreover, allows us to be tempted, to make us richer in merits, as it was said to Tobias: *And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptations should prove thee*—(Tob. xii. 13). Thus a soul need not imagine herself out of God's favour because she is tempted, but should make it rather a motive of hope that God loves her. It is a delusion of the devil to lead some pusillanimous persons to suppose that temptations are sins that contaminate the soul. It is not bad thoughts that make us lose God, but the consenting to them; let the suggestions of the devil be ever

so violent, let those filthy imaginations which overload our minds be ever so lively, they cannot cast the least stain on our souls, provided only we yield no consent to them; on the contrary, they make the soul purer, stronger, and dearer to Almighty God. St. Bernard says that every time we overcome a temptation we win a fresh crown in Heaven: "As often as we conquer, so often are we crowned." An Angel once appeared to a Cistercian monk, and put a crown into his hands, with orders that he should carry it to one of his fellow-Religious, as a reward for the temptation that he had lately overcome. Neither must we be disturbed if evil thoughts do not forthwith disappear from our minds, but continue obstinately to persecute us; it is enough if we detest them, and do our best to banish them.

God is faithful, says the Apostle; He will not allow us to be tempted above our strength: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with the temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it*—(1 Cor. x. 13).

II.

So far from losing anything by temptations, a person derives great profit from them. On this account God frequently allows the souls dearest to Him to undergo the severest temptations, that they may turn them into a source of greater merit on earth, and of greater glory in Heaven. Stagnant waters soon grow putrid; a soul at ease, without any struggle or temptation, stands in great danger of perishing from some self-conceit of her own merit. She perhaps imagines herself to have already attained to perfection, and therefore has little to fear; and consequently takes little pains to recommend herself to God and to secure her salvation; but when, on the contrary, she is agitated by temptations, and sees herself in danger of rushing headlong into sin, then she has recourse to God; she goes to the Divine Mother; she renews her resolution rather to die than to sin; she humbles herself, and casts herself into the arms of the Divine mercy: in this manner, as experience shows us,

the soul acquires fresh strength and closer union with God.

This must not, however, lead us to seek after temptations; on the contrary, we must pray God to deliver us from temptations, and from those more especially by which God foresees we should be overcome; and this is precisely the object of that petition of the Our Father: *Lead us not into temptation.* But when, by God's permission, we are beset with temptations, we must then, without being either alarmed or discouraged by those foul thoughts, rely wholly on Jesus Christ, and beseech Him to help us; and He, on His part, will not fail to give us the strength to resist. St. Augustine says: "Throw thyself on Him, and fear not; He will not withdraw to let thee fall."

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR ETERNAL SALVATION DEPENDS UPON OURSELVES.

What joy will he experience at the Judgment when he hears these welcome words: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* But it is written: *What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.* Let us weigh well what things we have hitherto been sowing, and let us do now what we shall then wish to have done.

I.

What great consolation he will enjoy at the Judgment hour who, for the love of Jesus Christ, has been detached

from all worldly things; who has loved contempt, and mortified the body; wno, in a word has loved only God!

What joy will he experience in hearing these welcome words: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* Be glad and rejoice, for now thou art saved, and there is no longer any fear of being lost.

On the contrary, the soul which leaves this life in a state of sin, will, even before Jesus condemns it, condemn itself, and declare itself deserving of hell.

O Mary, my powerful advocate, pray to Jesus for me. Help me, now that thou art able to help me. For then thou wouldst have to see me perish and not be able to assist me.

What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap—(Gal. vi. 8). Let us consider what things we have hitherto been sowing, and let us do now what we shall then wish to have done.

If now, within an hour, we had to stand for judgment, how much should we be willing to give to purchase another year? And how are we going to employ the years which remain for us?

II.

The Abbot Agatho, after long years of penance, when he thought of Judgment, would say: "What will become of me when I shall be judged?" And holy Job exclaimed: *What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? And when he shall examine, what shall I answer him?*—(Job. xxxi. 14). And what shall we answer when Jesus Christ calls us to account for the graces He has bestowed upon us, and for the bad use we have made of them?

O my God, *deliver not up to beasts the souls that confess to thee*—(Ps. lxxiii. 19). I do not deserve pardon, but Thou wouldst not have me to lose confidence in Thy mercy. Save me, O Lord, and raise me up from the mire of my miseries. I desire to amend my life, do Thou assist me.

The cause to be decided at the hour of our death will

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be one that will involve eternal happiness or eternal misery. Hence we should be most careful in using our utmost endeavours to secure success. Each one, considering this, should say to himself: Yes, this is true. Why, therefore, do I not leave all things to give myself entirely to God? *Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found*—(Is. lv. 6). The sinner who thinks to find God at the Judgment after death will not find Him. But in life he who seeks Him, finds Him.

O Jesus, if hitherto I have despised Thy love, I now seek for nothing but to love Thee and to be loved by Thee. Grant that I may find Thee, O God of my soul!

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER.

GOD WISHES ALL MEN TO BE SAVED.

Taking, then, for granted that Prayer is necessary for the attainment of Eternal Life, as we have proved, we ought, consequently, to take for granted also that every one has Divine assistance to enable him *actually to pray*, without need of any further special grace; and that *by Prayer* he may obtain all the *other graces necessary to* enable him *to persevere in keeping the Commandments*, and thus gain Eternal Life; so that no one who is lost can ever excuse himself by saying that it was through want of the aid necessary for his salvation. For as God, in the *natural order*, has ordained that man should be born naked, and in want of several things necessary for life, but then has given him hands and intelligence to clothe himself and provide for his other needs; so, in the *supernatural* order, man is born unable to obtain salvation by his own strength; but God in His goodness grants to every one the grace of Prayer, by which

he is able to obtain all other graces which he needs in order to keep the Commandments and to be saved.

But before I come to treat this point, I must first establish Two Preliminary Propositions :

FIRST PRELIMINARY PROPOSITION.

GOD WISHES ALL MEN TO BE SAVED, AND THEREFORE CHRIST DIED TO SAVE ALL MEN.

(a) *God wishes all men to be saved.*

God loves all things that He has created : *For thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which thou hast made*—(Wis. xi. 25). Now love cannot be idle : "All love has a force of its own, and cannot be idle," says St. Augustine. Hence love necessarily implies benevolence, so that the person who loves cannot help doing good to the person beloved whenever there is an opportunity : "Love persuades a man to do those things which he believes to be good for him whom he loves," says Aristotle. If, then, God loves all men, He must, in consequence, will that all should obtain Eternal salvation, which is the one and sovereign good of man, seeing that it is the one end for which he was created : *You have your fruit unto sanctification; and the end life everlasting*—(Rom. vi. 22).

This doctrine, that God wishes all men to be saved, and that Jesus Christ died for the salvation of all, is now a certain doctrine taught by the Catholic Church, as theologians in common teach, for example, Petavius, Gonet, Gotti, and others, besides Tourneley, who adds, that it is *a doctrine all but of Faith.*

1.—*Proved from Decision of the Church.*

With reason, therefore, were the Predestinarians condemned, who, among their errors, taught that God does not will all men to be saved, as Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, testifies of them : "The ancient Predestinarians asserted that God does not will all men to be

saved, but only those who *are* saved." These persons were condemned, first in the Council of Arles, A.D. 475, which pronounced "anathema to him that said that Christ did not die for all men, and that He does not will all to be saved." They were next condemned in the Council of Lyons, A.D. 490, where Lucidus was forced to retract, and also to proclaim, "I condemn the man who says that Christ did not suffer for the salvation of all men." So also in the ninth century, Gottschalk, who renewed the same error, was condemned by the Council of Quercy, A.D. 853, in the third Article of which it was decided, "God wills all men, without exception, to be saved, although all men be not saved." These men were justly condemned, precisely because they taught that God does not will all men to be saved; since from the proposition that those whom God wills to be saved are infallibly saved, it would logically follow that God does not will even all the faithful to be saved, let alone all men.

This was also clearly expressed by the Council of Trent, in which it was said that Jesus Christ died, "that all might receive the adoption of sons," and again it says: "But though He died for all, yet all do not receive the benefits of His death." The Council, then, takes for granted that the Redeemer died not only for the elect, but also for those who, through their own fault, do not receive the benefit of Redemption. Nor is it of any use to affirm that the Council only meant to say that Jesus Christ has given to the world a ranson *sufficient* to save all men; for in this sense we might say that He died also for the devils. Moreover, the Council of Trent intended here to reprove the errors of those innovators, who, not denying that the Blood of Christ was *sufficient to save all, yet asserted that in fact it was not shed and given for all.* This is the error which the Council intended to condemn when it said that our Saviour died for all. Further, in Chapter VI., it says that sinners are put in a fit state to receive justification by hope in God through the merits of Jesus Christ: "They are raised to hope, trusting that God will be merciful to them

through Christ." Now, if Jesus Christ had not applied to all the merits of His Passion, then, since no one (without a special revelation) could be certain of being among the number of those to whom the Redeemer had willed to apply the fruit of His merits, no sinner could entertain such hope, not having the certain and secure foundation which is necessary for hope; namely, that God wills all men to be saved, and will grant pardon to all sinners made worthy of it by the merits of Jesus Christ.

2.—*Proved from the celebrated text of St. Paul.*

On the other hand, both the Scriptures and all the Fathers assure us that God sincerely and really wishes the salvation of all men and the conversion of all sinners, as long as they are in this world. For this we have, first of all, the express words of St. Paul : *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*—(1 Tim. ii. 4). The sentence of the Apostle is absolute and decisive—*God wills all men to be saved.* These words in their natural sense declare that God truly wills all men to be saved; and it is a certain rule received in common by all, that the words of Scripture are to be interpreted in the literal sense, except in the sole case where the literal sense is repugnant to Faith and morals. St. Bonaventure writes precisely to our purpose when he says : "We must hold that when the Apostle says, *God wills all men to be saved*, it is necessary to grant that He *does will* it."

It is true that St. Augustine and St. Thomas mention different interpretations which have been given to this text, but both these Doctors understand it to mean a real will of God to save all, without exception.

And concerning St. Augustine, we shall see just now that this was his true opinion; so that St. Prosper protests against attributing to him the idea that God did not *sincerely* wish the salvation of all men, and of each individual, as an aspersion on the holy Doctor. Hence the same St. Prosper, who was a most faithful disciple of his, says : "It is most sincerely to be believed

and confessed that God wills all men to be saved; since the Apostle (whose very words these are) is particular in commanding that prayers should be made to God for all."

The argument of the Saint is clear, founded on St. Paul's words in the above-cited passage : *I desire, therefore, . . . that supplications, prayers . . . be made for all men*—(1 Tim. ii. 1); and then he adds : *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved*—(1 Tim. ii. 3, 4). So the Apostle wishes us *to pray for all*, exactly in the sense that God wishes *the salvation of all*. St. Chrysostom uses the same argument : " If He wills all to be saved, surely we ought to pray for all. If He desires all to be saved, do you also be of one mind with Him." And if in some passages in his controversy with the Semi-Pelagians, St. Augustine seems to have held a different interpretation of this text, saying that God does not will the salvation of each individual, but only of some, Petavius well observes that here the holy Father speaks only incidentally, not with direct intention; or at any rate, that he speaks of the grace of that absolute and victorious will (*voluntas absoluta et victrix*) with which God *absolutely wills the salvation* of some persons, and of which the Saint elsewhere says, " The will of the Almighty is always invincible."

Let us hear how St. Thomas uses another method of reconciling the opinion of St. Augustine with that of St. John Damascene, who holds that *antecedently* God wills all and each individual to be saved : " God's first intention is to will all men to be saved, that *as Good* He may make us partakers of His goodness : but after we have sinned, He wills *as Just* to punish us." On the other hand, St. Augustine (as we have seen) seems in a few passages to think differently. But St. Thomas reconciles these opinions, and says St. John Damascene spoke of the *antecedent will* of God, by which he really wills all men to be saved, while St. Augustine spoke of the *consequent will*. He then goes on to explain the meaning of *antecedent* and *consequent* will : " *Ante-*

cedent will is that by which God wills all to be saved; but when all the circumstances of this or that individual are considered, it is not found to be good that all men should be saved; for it is good that he who prepares himself, and consents to it, should be saved; but not good that he who is unwilling and resists. . . . And this is called the *consequent will,* because it presupposes a foreknowledge of a man's deeds, *not as a cause of the act of will,* but as *a reason* for *the thing willed* and determined." . . .

And again: "God, by His most liberal will, gives grace to every one that prepares himself—*who wills all men to be saved*; and therefore the grace of God is wanting to no man, but as far as He is concerned He communicates it to every one." . . . And St. Thomas again, and more distinctly, declares what he means by *antecedent* and *consequent* will: "A judge *antecedently* wishes every man *to live,* but he *consequently* wishes a murderer *to be hanged;* so God *antecedently wills every man to be saved, but He consequently wills some to be damned;* in consequence, that is, of the exigencies of His justice."

I have no intention here of blaming the opinion that men are predestined to glory *previously to the provision of their merits;* I only say that I cannot understand how those who think that God, without any regard to their merits, has elected some to eternal life, and excluded others, can therefore persuade themselves that He wills all to be saved; unless, indeed, they mean that this will of God is not true and sincere, but rather a hypothetical or metaphorical will . . .

It is certain that the happiness of a creature consists in the attainment of the end for which he was created. It is likewise certain that God creates all men for eternal life. If, therefore, God, having created certain men for eternal life, had thereupon, without regard to their sins, excluded them from it, He would in creating them have utterly hated them without cause, and would have done them the greatest injury they could possibly suffer in excluding them from the attainment of their end,

that is, of the glory for which they had been created: "For," says Petavius in a passage which we abridge, "God cannot feel indifferent whether He loves or hates His creatures, especially men, whom He either loves to eternal life or hates to damnation. Now it is the greatest evil that can befall man to be alienated from God and to be reprobate; wherefore, if God wills the everlasting destruction of any man's soul, He does not love him, but hates him with the greatest hatred possible in that kind which transcends the natural order." ... "Wherefore," Petavius concludes, "if God loves every man with a love which is *antecedent* to his merits, He does not hate his soul, and therefore He does not desire the greatest evil to him." If, then, God loves all men, as is certain, we ought to hold that He wills all to be saved, and that He has never hated any one to such a degree that He has willed to do him the greatest evil, by excluding him from glory *previously to the prevision of his demerits.*

I say, however, and repeat again and again, that I cannot understand it; for this matter of predestination is so profound a mystery, that it made the Apostle exclaim: *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?*—(Rom. xi. 33, 34). We ought to submit ourselves to the will of God, Who has chosen to leave this mystery in obscurity in His Church, that we all may humble ourselves under the deep judgments of His Divine Providence. All the more, because Divine grace, by which alone men can gain eternal life, is dispensed more or less abundantly by God entirely gratuitously, and without any regard to our merits. So that to save ourselves it will always be necessary for us to throw ourselves into the arms of the Divine Mercy, in order that God may assist us with His grace to obtain salvation, trusting always in His infallible promises to hear and save the man who prays to Him.

But let us return to our point, that God sincerely wills all men to be saved.

3.—*There are other texts which prove the same thing.*

As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked may turn from his way and live—(Ezech. xxxiii. 11). He says that not only does He *not will the death,* but that *He wills the life* of a sinner; and He swears, as Tertullian observes, in order that He may be more readily believed in this : "When moreover He swears, saying, *as I live,* He desires to be believed."

Further, David says : *For wrath is in his indignation, and life in his will*—(Ps. xxix. 6). If He chastises us, He does it because our sins provoke Him to indignation; but as to His will, He wills not our death but our life; *Life in his will.* St. Basil says concerning this text, that God wills all to be made partakers of life. David says elsewhere : *Our God is the God of salvation; . . . of the Lord are the issues from death*—(Ps. lxvii. 21). On this Bellarmine says : "This is proper to Him; this is His nature; our God is a saving God, and His are the issues from death—that is, liberation from death"; so that it is God's proper nature to save all, and to deliver all from eternal death.

Our Lord says : *Come to me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you*—(Matt. xi. 28). If He *calls all* to salvation, then He *truly wills all* to be saved. Again, St. Peter says : *He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should return to penance*—(2. Pet. iii. 9). He does not will the damnation of any one, but He wills that all should do penance, and so be saved.

Again the Lord says : *Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall open to me the door I will come in to him. Why will you die, O house of Israel? Return ye and live*—(Ezech. xviii. 31, 32). *What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?*—(Is. v. 4). *How often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not!*—(Matt. xxiii. 37). How

could the Lord have said that He stands knocking at the hearts of us sinners? How exhort us so strongly to return to His arms? How reproach us by asking what more He could have done for our salvation? How say that He has willed to receive us as children, *if he had not a true will to save all men*? Again, St. Luke relates that our Lord, looking on Jerusalem from a distance, and contemplating the destruction of its people because of sin, wept: *Seeing the city, he wept over it*—(Luke xix. 41). Why did He weep then, says Theophylact (after St. Chrysostom), seeing the ruin of the Jews, unless it was *because He really desired their salvation*? How, then, after so many attestations of our Lord, in which He makes known to us that He wills to see all men saved, how can it ever be said that God does not will the salvation of all? "But if these texts of Scripture," says Petavius, "in which God has testified His will in such clear and often-repeated expressions, nay even with tears and with an oath, may be abused and distorted to the very opposite sense—namely, that God determined to send all mankind (except a few) to perdition, and never had a will to save them, what dogma of Faith is so clear as to be safe from similar injury and cavil?" . . . And Cardinal Sfondrati adds: "Those who think otherwise seem to me to make God a mere stage-god; like those people who pretend to be kings in a play, when indeed they are anything but kings."

4.—*Proved from the general consent of the Fathers.*

Moreover, this truth, that God wills all men to be saved, is confirmed by the general consent of the Fathers. There can be no doubt that all the *Greek Fathers* are unanimous in saying that God wills all and each individual to be saved. So, St. Justin, St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. Cyril, St. Methodius, and St. Chrysostom, all adduced by Petavius. But let us see what the *Latin Fathers* say.

St. Jerome: "God wills to save all; but since no man is saved without his own will, God wills us to will

what is good, that when we have willed, He may also will to fulfil His designs in us." And in another place: "God therefore willed to save those who desire (to be saved); and He invited them to salvation that their will might have its reward; but they would not believe in Him."

St. Hilary: "God would have all men to be saved, and not those alone who are to belong to the number of the elect, *but all absolutely,* so as to make no exception."

St. Paulinus: "Christ says to all: *Come to me,* etc.; for He, the Creator of all men, so far as He is concerned, wills *every man to be saved.*"

St. Ambrose: "Even with respect to the wicked He had to manifest His will (to save them), and therefore He could not pass over His betrayer, that all might see that in the election even of the traitor He exhibits His desire to save all . . . and, so far as God is concerned, He shows to all that He was willing to deliver all." . . .

St. Chrysostom asks: "Why then are not all men saved, if God wills all to be saved?" And he answers: "Because every man's will does not coincide with God's will, and He forces no man." St. Augustine: "God wills all men to be saved, but not so as to destroy their free will." He says the same thing in several other places to which we shall refer later.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

Let us come now to the means which we have to employ in order to vanquish temptations. Spiritual

masters prescribe a variety of means; but the most necessary, and the safest, of which only I will here speak, is to have immediate recourse to God with all humility and confidence, saying: "Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord make haste to help me!" This short prayer will enable us to overcome the assaults of all the devils of hell; for God is infinitely more powerful than all of them. Almighty God knows well that of ourselves we are unable to resist the temptations of the infernal powers; and on this account the most learned Cardinal Gotti remarks that "whenever we are assailed, and in danger of being overcome, God is obliged to give us strength enough to resist as often as we call upon Him for it."

And how can we doubt of receiving help from Jesus Christ, after all the promises He has made us in the Holy Scriptures? *Come to me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you*—(Matt. xi. 28). Come to Me, ye who are wearied in fighting against temptations, and I will restore your strength. *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*—(Ps. xlix. 15). When thou seest thyself troubled by thine enemies, call upon Me, and I will bring thee out of danger, and thou shalt praise Me. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear: thou shalt cry, and He shall say, *Here I am*—(Is. lviii. 9). Then shalt thou call upon the Lord for help, and He will hear thee: thou shalt cry out, Quick, O Lord, help me! and He will say to thee, Behold, here I am; I am present to help thee. *Who hath called upon him and he despised him?*—(Ecclus. ii. 12). And who, says the Prophet, has ever called upon God, and God has despised him and given him no help? David felt sure of never falling a prey to his enemies, whilst he could have recourse to God. He says: *Praising, I will call upon the Lord: and I shall be saved from my enemies*—(Ps. xvii. 4). For he well knew that God is close to all who invoke His aid: *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him*—(Ps. cxliv. 18). And St. Paul adds that the Lord is by no means sparing, but lavish of graces towards all that

pray to Him : *Rich unto all that call upon him.*—(Rom. x. 12).

II.

Oh, would to God that all men had recourse to Him whenever they are tempted to offend Him; they would then certainly never commit sin! They unhappily fall, because, led away by the cravings of their vicious appetites, they prefer to lose God, the Sovereign Good, than to forego their wretched short-lived pleasures. Experience gives us manifest proofs that whoever calls on God in temptation does not fall; and whoever fails to call on Him, as surely falls : and this is especially true of temptations to impurity. Solomon himself said that he knew very well that he could not be chaste unless God gave him the grace to be so; and therefore he invoked Him by prayer in the moment of temptation : *And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it . . . I went to the Lord and besought him*—(Wis. viii. 21). In temptations against purity (and the same holds good with regard to those against Faith), we must take it as a rule never to stay and combat the temptation hand to hand; but we must endeavour immediately to get rid of it indirectly by making a good act of the love of God or of sorrow for our sins, or else by applying ourselves to some indifferent occupation calculated to distract us. As soon as we discover a thought of evil tendency, we must disown it immediately, and, so to speak, close the door in its face, and deny it all entrance into the mind, without tarrying in the least to examine its object or errand. We must cast away these foul suggestions as quickly as we would shake off a hot spark from the fire.

Monday—Eighth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

When all shall be gathered together in the Valley of Josaphet, what a glorious appearance will the Saints make who in this world were so much despised! And what a horrible appearance will so many of those great ones of earth, and kings, and princes make, who will on that day stand condemned!

I.

O ye foolish worldlings! I look forward to your appearance in the Valley of Josaphet. There you will change your sentiments! There you will bewail your folly! But to no purpose.

And you, who are hard tried in this world, be of good heart. On that last day all your pains will be changed into the delights and enjoyments of Paradise: *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy*—(Jo. xvi. 20).

What a glorious appearance will the Saints then make who in this world were so much despised! And what a horrible appearance will so many of those nobles and kings and princes make, who will stand condemned on that day!

My crucified and despised Jesus, I embrace Thy Cross. What is the world, what are pleasures, what are honours? O my God, Thee only do I desire; Thee alone and nothing more!

What horror will not the reprobate in that day experience at being rejected by Jesus Christ in that terrible

sentence, publicly pronounced: *Depart from me, ye cursed*!—(Matt. xxv. 41).

O my Jesus, I also at one time deserved such a sentence. But now I hope that Thou hast pardoned me. Oh, do not suffer me to be any more separated from Thee. I love Thee, and I hope to love Thee forever.

O what joy, on the other hand will the Elect experience when they hear Jesus Christ inviting them to partake of the bliss of Heaven in those sweet words: *Come ye blessed*!

My beloved Redeemer, I hope in Thy precious Blood that I also shall be numbered among those happy souls, and embracing Thy feet, love Thee for all eternity in Heaven!

II.

Let us, then, reanimate our Faith, and reflect that one day we shall meet in that Valley of Judgment and be placed either on the right hand with the Elect, or on the left with the reprobate. Let us cast ourselves at the foot of the Crucifix and look into the state of our souls; and if we find them unprepared to appear before Jesus Christ, the Divine Judge, let us apply a remedy now whilst we have time. Let us detach ourselves from everything which is not God, and unite ourselves to Jesus Christ as much as we are able, by Meditation, the Holy Communion, mortification of the senses, and, above all, by Prayer. The use of these means which God affords us for our salvation will be a sure sign of our predestination.

O my Jesus and my Judge, I do not wish to lose Thee, but I wish to love Thee forever. I love Thee, my Lord, I love Thee; and thus I hope to be able to address Thee when I shall first behold Thee as my Judge. I now say to Thee: Lord, if Thou desirest to chastise me, as I have deserved, chastise me, but do not deprive me of Thy love; grant that I may always love Thee, and may be always loved by Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER.

(b) *Therefore Christ died to save all men.*

That Jesus Christ, therefore, died for all and for each individual is clear, not only from the Scriptures, but from the writings of the Fathers. Great, certainly, was the ruin which the sin of Adam occasioned to the whole human race; but Jesus Christ, by the grace of Redemption, repaired all the evils which Adam brought upon us. Hence the Council of Trent has declared that Baptism renders the soul pure and immaculate; and that the concupiscence which remains in it is not for its harm, but to enable it to gain a higher crown, if it resists so as not to consent to sin: "For in those who have been regenerated God hates nothing . . . they are made innocent, immaculate, pure, and beloved of God . . . But this holy Synod confesses and declares that concupiscence or the fuel (of sin) remains in baptized persons; but as it was left for our probation, it cannot injure those who do not consent to it; nay rather, he who contends lawfully (against it) shall be crowned." Thus, as St. Leo says, "we have gained greater things by the grace of Christ than we had lost through the envy of the devil." The gain which we have made by the Redemption of Jesus Christ is greater than the loss which we suffered by the sin of Adam. The Apostle plainly declared this when he said: *Not as the offence, so also the gift . . . And where sin abounded, grace did more abound*—(Rom. v. 15, 20). Our Lord says the same: *I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly*—(Jo. x. 10). David and Isaias had predicted it: *With him is plentiful redemption*—(Ps. cxxix. 7) *She hath received of the hand of the Lord double for all her sins*—(Is. xl. 2). Cornelius à Lapide interprets these words and says: "God has

so forgiven iniquities through Christ that men have received double—that is, very much greater good, instead of the punishment of sin which they deserved."

Now, our Saviour, as I have said, died for all, and offered the work of His Redemption to the Eternal Father for the salvation of each one, according to the testimony of the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church.

1.—*The Testimony of Holy Scriptures.*

The Son of Man came to save that which was lost—(Matt. xviii. 11). *Who gave himself a redemption for all*—(1 Tim. ii. 6). *Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but to him who died for them*—(2 Cor. v. 15). *For therefore we labour and are reviled, because we hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of the faithful*—(1 Tim. iv. 10). *And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world*—(1 Jo. ii. 2). *For the charity of Christ presseth us, judging this that, if one died for all, then all were dead*—(2 Cor. v. 14). Now, to speak only of this last text, I ask, how could the Apostle ever have concluded that *all were dead* because Christ died for all, unless he had been certain that Christ had really died for all? And the more so seeing that St. Paul uses this truth as an argument for the love which it should kindle in us towards our Saviour. But by far the best proof of the desire and wish which God has to save all men is found in that other text of St. Paul: *He that spared not his own son, but delivered him for us all.* The force of this passage is increased by what follows: *How hath he not also with him given us all things?*—(Rom. viii. 32). If God has given us *all things,* how can we henceforth fear that He has denied us election to glory if we fulfil the condition of corresponding to His grace? And if He has given us His Son, says Cardinal Sfondrati, how will He deny us the grace to be saved? "Here he clearly instructs us" (he is speaking of St.

Paul) "that God assures us that He will not refuse us the less after He has given the greater; that He will not deny us grace to save ourselves, after giving us His Son that we might be saved." And in truth, how could St. Paul have said that God, in giving us His Son, has *given us all things,* if the Apostle had believed that God had excluded many from the glory which is the one good and the one end for which they were created? Has, then, God given *all things* to these "many" and yet denied them the *best thing*—namely, eternal happiness, without which (as there is no middle way) they cannot but be eternally miserable? Or are we to believe another thing still more unseemly, as a certain learned author well observes—namely, that God gives to all the grace to attain glory, but then refuses to allow many to enter on its enjoyment; that He gives the means, and refuses the end!

2.—*Proved from the teaching of the Holy Fathers.*

Besides the testimony of the Scripture, all the holy Fathers agree in saying that *Jesus Christ died to obtain eternal salvation for all men.*

St. Jerome: "Christ died for all; He was the only One Who could be offered for all, because all were dead in sin."

St. Ambrose: "Christ came to cure our wounds; but since all do not search for the remedy . . . therefore He cures those who are willing; He does not force the unwilling." In another place: "He has provided for all men the means of cure, that whoever perishes may lay the blame of his death on himself, because he would not be cured when he had a remedy; and that, on the other hand, the Mercy of Christ to all may be openly proclaimed, Who wills that all men should be saved." And more clearly still in another place: "Jesus did not write His will for the benefit of *one,* or of *few,* but of *all;* we are all inscribed therein as His heirs; the legacy is in common, and belongs by right to all; the universal heritage belonging wholly to each." Mark the words,

"*We are all inscribed as heirs; the Redeemer has written us all down as heirs of heaven.*"

St. Leo: "As Christ found no one free from guilt, so He came to deliver all."

St. Augustine, on the words of St. John, *For God did not send his son . . . to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by him*—(John iii. 17), says: "So as far as it lies with the Physician, He came to heal the sick man." Mark the words, "as far as it lies with the Physician." For God, as far as He is concerned, effectually wills the salvation of all, but (as St. Augustine goes on to say) cannot heal the man who will not be healed: "He heals universally, but He heals not the unwilling. For what can be happier for thee, than, as thou hast thy life in thy hands, so to have thy health depend on thy will?" When he says: "He heals," he speaks of sinners who are sick, and unable to get well by their own strength; when he says "universally," he declares that nothing is wanting on God's part for sinners to be healed and saved. Then when he says "as thou hast thy life in thy hands, so thy health depends on thy will," he shows that God, for His part, really wills us all to be saved; otherwise, it would not be in our power to obtain health and eternal life. In another place: "He Who redeemed us at such a cost, wills not that we perish, for He does not purchase in order to destroy, but He redeems in order to give life." He has redeemed us all, in order to save us all. And the Saint encourages all to hope for eternal bliss, in that celebrated sentence: "Let human frailty raise itself; let it not say 'I shall never be happy.' . . . It is a greater thing that Christ has *done*, than that which He has *promised*. What has He done? He has died for thee. What has He promised? That thou shalt live with Him."

Some have pretended to say that Jesus Christ offered His Blood for all, in order to obtain grace for them, but not salvation. But Petrocorensis will not hear of this opinion, of which he says: "O disputatious trifling! How could the Wisdom of God will the means of salva-

tion, without willing its end?" St. Augustine, moreover, speaking against the Jews, says: "Ye acknowledge the Side which ye pierced, that it has opened both by you and for you." If Jesus Christ had not really given His Blood for all, the Jews might have answered St. Augustine that it was quite true the side of our Saviour had been opened *by them*, but that it was not opened *for them*.

In like manner St. Thomas has no doubt that Jesus Christ died for all; whence he deduces that He wills all to be saved: "Christ Jesus is Mediator between God and men; not between God and *some men*, but between God and *all men*; and this would not be unless He willed *all to be saved*." This is confirmed, as we have already said, by the condemnation of the fifth Proposition of Jansenius, who said: "It is semi-Pelagianism to assert that Christ died or shed His Blood for all men." The sense of this, according to the context of the other *Condemned Propositions*, and according to the principles of Jansenius, is as follows:—Jesus Christ did not die to merit for all men the graces sufficient for salvation, but only for the predestined . . . Therefore the contrary, and the Catholic belief is as follows:—It is not semi-Pelagianism, but it is right to say that Jesus Christ died to merit not only for *the predestinate*, but for *all*, even for *the reprobate*, grace sufficient to obtain eternal salvation in the ordinary course of Providence.

Further, that God truly, on His part, wills all men to be saved, and that Jesus Christ died for the salvation of all, is proved to us by the fact that God imposes on us all the precept of Hope. The reason is clear. St. Paul calls Christian Hope the anchor of the soul, secure and firm: *Who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm*—(Heb. vi. 18, 19). Now in what could we fix this sure and firm anchor of our hope, except in the truth that God wills all to be saved? . . . And if Jesus Christ had not died for the salvation of all, how could we have a sure ground to hope for salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ, without a special

revelation? But St. Augustine had no doubt when he said: "All my hope, and the certainty of my Faith, is in the Precious Blood of Christ, which was shed for us and for our salvation." Thus the Saint placed all his hope in the Blood of Jesus Christ; because the Faith assured him that Christ died for all. But we shall have a better opportunity later of examining this question of hope when we come to establish the principal point—namely, that the Grace of Prayer is given to all.

CHILDREN WHO DIE WITHOUT BAPTISM.

A difficulty answered.

Here it only remains for us to answer the objection which is drawn from children being lost when they die before Baptism, and before they come to the use of reason. *If God wills all to be saved,* it is objected, *how is it that these children perish without any fault of their own,* since God gives them no assistance to attain eternal salvation? There are two answers to this objection, the second more correct than the first. I will state them briefly.

First, it is answered that God, by His *antecedent will,* wishes all to be saved, and therefore has granted universal means for the salvation of all. But these means at times fail of their effect, either by reason of the unwillingness of some persons to avail themselves of them, or because others are unable to make use of them, on account of secondary causes (such as the death of children), causes the course of which God is not bound to change, after having disposed the whole according to the just judgment of His general Providence. All this is gathered from the teaching of St. Thomas. Jesus Christ offered His merits for all men, and instituted Baptism for all; but the application of this means of salvation, so far as relates to children who die before the use of reason, is not prevented by the direct will of God, but by a merely permissive will; because as He is the general

Provider of all things, He is not bound to disturb the general order to provide for the particular order.

The second answer is that *not to be blessed* is not the same as *to perish,* for eternal happiness being a gift entirely gratuitous, the privation of it is not a punishment. The opinion, therefore, of St. Thomas, is very just, that children who die in infancy have neither the *pain of sense* nor *the pain of loss.* They have not *the pain of sense,* he says, "because pain of sense corresponds to conversion to creatures; and in Original Sin there is not conversion to creatures and therefore *pain of sense* is not due to Original Sin." Original Sin does not imply an act in the infant deserving of punishment. Objectors oppose to this the teaching of St. Augustine, who in some place shows his opinion to be that children are condemned *even to the pain of sense.* But in another place he declares that he was very uncertain on this point. These are his words: "When I come to the punishment of infants, I find myself, believe me, in great straits; nor can I by any means find an answer." And in another place he writes that it may be said that such children receive neither reward nor punishment: "Nor need we fear that there cannot be a *middle sentence* between *reward* and *punishment;* since their life was midway between *sin* and *good works.*" This was directly affirmed by St. Gregory Nazianzen: "Children will be sentenced by the just Judge neither to the glory of Heaven nor to punishment." St. Gregory of Nyssa was of the same opinion: "The premature death of children shows that they who have thus ceased to live will not be in pain and unhappiness."

And as far as relates to *the pain of loss,* although these children are excluded from glory, nevertheless St. Thomas, who had reflected most deeply on this point, teaches that no one feels pain for the want of that good which he is not capable of acquiring; so that as no man grieves that he cannot fly, or no private citizen that he is not emperor, so these children feel no pain at being deprived of the glory of which they have never been made capable; since they could never pretend to it by

nature, or by their own merits. St. Thomas adds, in another place, a further reason which is, that the supernatural knowledge of glory comes only by means of actual Faith, which transcends all natural knowledge; so that children can never feel pain for the privation of that glory of which they never had a supernatural knowledge. He further says that such children will not only not grieve for the loss of eternal happiness, but will, moreover, have pleasure in their natural gifts; and will even in some way enjoy God, so far as is implied in natural knowledge, and in natural love: "Rather will they rejoice in this, that they will participate much in the Divine Goodness, and in natural perfections." And he immediately adds that although they will be separated from God, as regards the union of glory, nevertheless, "they will be united with Him by participation of natural gifts; and so will even be able to rejoice in Him with a natural knowledge and love."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

If the impure temptation has already forced its way into the mind, and plainly pictures its object to the imagination, so as to stir the passions, then, according to the advice of St. Jerome, we must burst forth into these words: "O Lord, thou art my helper." As soon, says the Saint, as we feel the sting of concupiscence, we must have recourse to God, and say: "O Lord, do Thou assist me"; we must invoke the most holy Names

of Jesus and Mary, which possess a wonderful efficacy in the suppression of temptations of this nature. St. Francis de Sales says that no sooner do children espy a wolf than they instantly seek refuge in the arms of their father and mother, and there they remain out of all danger. Our conduct must be the same; we must flee without delay for succour to Jesus and Mary, by earnestly calling upon them. I repeat that we must instantly have recourse to them, without giving a moment's audience to, or disputing with, the temptation. It is related in the 4th paragraph of the *Book of Sentences of the Fathers,* that one day St. Pacomius heard the devil boasting that he had frequently got the better of a certain monk on account of his lending ear to him, and not turning instantly to call upon God. He heard another devil, on the contrary, utter this complaint: As for me, I can do nothing with my monk, because he never fails to have recourse to God, and always defeats me.

II.

Should the temptation, however, obstinately persist in attacking us, let us beware of becoming troubled or angry at it; for this might put it in the power of our enemy to overcome us. We must, on such occasions, make an act of humble resignation to the will of God, Who thinks fit to allow us to be tormented by these abominable temptations; and we must say: O Lord, I deserve to be molested with these filthy suggestions, in punishment of my past sins, but Thou must help to free me. And as long as the temptation lasts, let us never cease calling on Jesus and Mary. It is also very profitable, in the like importunity of temptations, to renew our firm promise to God of suffering every torment, and a thousand deaths, rather than offend Him; and at the same time we must invoke His Divine assistance. And even should the temptation be of such violence as to put us in imminent risk of consenting to it, we must then redouble our prayers, hasten into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, cast ourselves at the foot of the Crucifix, or of some image of our Blessed Lady, and

here pray with increased fervour, and cry out for help with groans and tears. God is certainly ready to hear all who pray to Him; and it is from Him alone, and not from our own exertions, that we must look for strength to resist; but sometimes Almighty God wills these struggles and then He makes up for our weakness and grants us the victory.

Tuesday—Eighth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

REMORSE OF CHRISTIANS IN HELL.

The greatest torment the damned will have to suffer in hell will be from themselves; from their own remorse of conscience. *Their worm dieth not.* Alas, what a cruel worm will it be to Christians who are lost in hell, to remember for what trifles they have damned their souls!

I.

The greatest torment the damned will have to suffer in hell will be from themselves; from their own remorse of conscience. *Their worm dieth not.* Alas, what a cruel worm will it be to Christians who are lost in hell, to remember for what trifles they have damned their souls! Have we, then, they will say, for such trifling, transitory, and poisonous gratifications, lost Heaven and God for ever and condemned ourselves to this prison of eternal torments? We had the happiness of being of the true Faith; but, forsaking God, we led miserable lives, to be succeeded by another life still more miser-

able in this pool of fire! God favoured us with so many lights, so many means of salvation, and we miserably chose to damn ourselves!

O my Jesus, thus should I now have been bewailing my misery in hell if Thou hadst let me die when I was in sin. I thank thee for the mercies Thou hast shown me, and detest all the sins that I have committed against Thee. Had I been in hell, I could no longer have loved Thee; but since I can still love Thee, I desire to love Thee with all my heart. I love Thee, my God, my Love, my All!

What does our past life appear at present but as a dream, a moment? But what will a life on earth of forty or fifty years appear to the damned, when, after hundreds and thousands of millions of years have passed away, they find that their eternity is only commencing?

How will those miserable pleasures for which they have sacrificed their salvation appear to them then? They will say: "Have we, then, for these accursed gratifications, which were scarcely tasted before they were ended, have we condemned ourselves to burn forever in this furnace of fire, abandoned by all, and for all eternity?"

II.

Another subject of remorse will be the thought of the little they were required to do in order to be saved. They will say: "Had we pardoned those injuries; had we overcome that human respect, had we avoided those occasions, we should not have now been lost."

It would not have cost us much to avoid those conversations; to deprive ourselves of those accursed gratifications; to yield that point of honour? Whatever it would have cost us, we should have been willing to do everything to obtain salvation; but we were not willing, and now there is no remedy for our eternal ruin. Had we frequented the Sacraments; had we not neglected Meditation; had we recommended ourselves to God, we should not have fallen into sin. We frequently proposed to do this, but we did it not. We sometimes began a

good course, but we did not persevere in it, and hence we are lost for ever!

O God of my soul, how many times have I promised to love Thee, and have again turned my back upon Thee? Oh, by that love with which Thou didst die for me on the Cross, grant me sorrow for my sins, grant me grace to love Thee, and ever to have recourse to Thee in the time of temptation!

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER.

SECOND PRELIMINARY PROPOSITION.

GOD GIVES TO ALL MEN THE GRACES NECESSARY FOR SALVATION WHEREBY ONE MAY BE SAVED THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THEM.

If, then, God wills all to be saved, it follows that He gives to all that grace and those aids which are necessary for the attainment of salvation, otherwise it could never be said that He has a true will to save all. The effect of God's antecedent will, says St. Thomas, by which He wills the salvation of all men, is "that order of nature the purpose of which is our salvation, and likewise those things which conduce to that end, and which are offered to all in common, whether by nature or by grace." It is certain, in contradiction to the blasphemies of Luther and Calvin, that God does not impose a law that is impossible to be observed. On the other hand, it is certain, that *without the assistance of grace* the observance of the law is impossible, as Innocent I declared against the Pelagians when he said: "It is certain that as we overcome by the aid of God, so without His aid we must be overcome." Pope Celestine declared the same thing. Therefore if God gives to all men a law they can keep, it follows that He also gives to all men

the grace necessary to observe it, whether immediately, or mediately by means of Prayer, as the Council of Trent has most clearly defined : " God does not command impossibilities ; but by commanding He admonishes you *both to do what you can* and *to ask for that which is beyond your power,* and by His help enables you to do it." Otherwise, if God refused us both the proximate and remote grace to enable us to fulfil the law, either the law would have been given in vain, or sin would be necessary, and if necessary would be no longer sin, as we shall presently prove at some length.

1.—*Teaching of the Fathers of the Greek Church.*

And this is the general opinion of the Greek Fathers :

St. Cyril of Alexandria says : " But if a man endowed as others, and equally with them, with the gifts of Divine grace, has fallen by his own free will, how shall Christ be said not to have preserved even him, since He delivered the man inasmuch as He gave him the aids to avoid sin ?" How, says the Saint, can that sinner blame Jesus Christ ? St. John Chrysostom asks : " How is it that some are vessels of wrath, others vessels of mercy ?" And he answers, " *Because of each person's free will ;* for, since God is very good, He manifests equal kindness to all." Then, speaking of Pharaoh, whose heart is said in Scripture to have been hardened, he adds : " If Pharaoh was not saved, it must all be attributed to his will, since no less was given to him than to those who were saved." And in another place, speaking of the petition of the mother of the sons of Zebedee, on the words *It is not mine to give*—(Matt. xx. 23), he observes : " By this Christ wished to show that it was *not simply his to give,* but that it also belonged *to the combatants to take* ; for if it depended only on Him, all men would be saved."

St. Isidore of Pelusium : " For God wills seriously, and in all ways, to assist those who are wallowing in vice, that He may deprive them of all excuse."

St. Cyril of Jerusalem : " God has opened the gate of

eternal life, so that, as far as He is concerned, all may gain it without anything to hinder them."

But the doctrine of these Greek Fathers does not please Jansenius, who has the temerity to say that they have spoken most imperfectly on the question of Grace: "None have spoken on Grace more imperfectly than the Greeks."

On the question of Grace, then, are we not to follow the teaching of the Greek Fathers, who were the first masters and columns of the Church? But perhaps the doctrine of the Greeks, especially in this important matter, was different from that of the Latin Church? On the very contrary, it is certain that the true doctrine of Faith came from the Greek to the Latin Church; so that, as St. Augustine said, when writing against Julian, who opposed to him the authority of the Greek Fathers, there can be no doubt that the Faith of the Latins is the same as that of the Greeks. Whom, then, are we to follow? Shall we follow Jansenius, whose errors have already been condemned as heretical by the Church; who had the temerity to say that even the just have not the grace requisite to enable them to keep certain precepts; and that man acquires merits and demerits, even though he acts through necessity, provided he is not forced by violence? These, and other errors as well, spring from his most false system.

2.—*Teaching of the Fathers of the Latin Church.*

But since the Greek Fathers do not satisfy Jansenius, let us see what the Latins say on this subject. They in no wise differ from the Greeks.

St. Jerome says: "Man can do no good work without God, Who, in giving free will, did not refuse His grace to aid every single work." Mark the words, "did not refuse His grace for every single work." St. Ambrose: "He would never come and knock at the door unless He wished to enter; it is our fault that He does not always enter." St. Leo: "Justly does He insist on the command, since He furnishes beforehand aid to keep it."

St. Hilary : "Now the grace of justification has abounded through one gift to all men. Innocent I : " He gives to man daily remedies; and unless we put confidence in them and depend upon them we shall never be able to overcome human errors."

St. Augustine : " It is not imputed to you as a sin that you are unwillingly ignorant, but that you neglect to learn that of which you are ignorant. Nor is it imputed as a sin that you do not bind up your wounded limbs, but (mark this) that you despise Him Who is willing to cure you. These are your own sins; for no man is deprived of the knowledge of how to seek with benefit to himself." In another place : " Therefore if the soul is ignorant what it is to do, it proceeds from this, that it has not yet learned; but it will receive this knowledge if it has made a good use of what it has already received; for it has received this that it can piously and diligently seek, if it will." Mark the words : " it has received power to seek piously and diligently." So that *every one receives at least the remote grace to seek*; and if he makes good use of this, *he will receive the proximate grace to perform that which at first he could not do*. St. Augustine founds all this on the principle that no man sins in doing that which he cannot help; therefore, if a man sins in anything, he sins in that he might have avoided it by the grace of God, which is wanting to no man : " Who sins in that which cannot in any way be avoided? But a man *does* sin, therefore it might have been avoided." " But only by His aid, Who cannot be deceived," says the Saint in another place—an evident reason, which makes it clear (as we shall show when we speak of the sin of the obstinate) that if the grace necessary to observe the Commandments were wanting, there would be no sin.

St. Thomas teaches the same in several places. In one place, in explaining the text, *Who wills all men to be saved*—(1 Tim. ii. 4), he says, " and therefore grace is wanting to no man, but (as far as God is concerned) is communicated to all, as the sun is present even to the eyes of the blind." So that as the sun sheds its light

oon all, and only those are deprived of it who volun-
rily blind themselves to its rays, so God communicates
all men grace to observe the Law; and men are lost
nply because they will not avail themselves of it. In
nother place: "It belongs to Divine Providence to
ovide all men with what is necessary to salvation, if
ly there be no impediment on man's part." If, then,
od gives all men the graces necessary for salvation, and
actual grace is necessary to overcome temptations, and
observe the Commandments, we must necessarily con-
ude that He gives all men either immediately or
ediately, actual grace to do good; so that no further
race is necessary to enable them to put in practice the
eans (such as *Prayer*) of obtaining actual proximate
race. In another place, on the words of St. John's
ospel, *No man cometh to me, etc.*—(Jo. vi. 44), he
ys: "If the heart of man be not lifted up, it is from
defect on the part of Him Who draws it, Who as far
He is concerned, never fails; but from an impediment
used by him who is being drawn."
Scotus says the same: "God wills to save all men, so
r as rests with Him, and with His antecedent will, by
hich He has given them the ordinary gifts necessary to
lvation." The Council of Cologne (1536) says:
Although no one is converted except he is drawn by
ie Father, yet let no one pretend to excuse himself on
ie plea of not being drawn. He stands at the gate and
nocks by the internal and the external word."

3.—*Testimony of Holy Scripture.*

Nor did the Fathers speak without warrant of the
ly Scriptures; for God in several places most clearly
sures us that He does not neglect to assist us with His
race, if we are willing to avail ourselves of it either for
erseverance, if we are in a state of justification, or for
onversion, if we are in sin.
*I stand at the gate and knock; if any man shall hear
my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to
him*—(Apoc. iii. 20). Bellarmine reasons well on this

text that our Lord Who knows that man cannot open without His grace, would knock in vain at the door of his heart, unless He had first conferred on him the grace to open when he will. This is exactly what St. Thomas teaches in explaining the text; he says that God gives every one the grace necessary for salvation, that he may correspond to it if he will: "God by His most liberal will gives grace to every one that prepares himself. *Behold I stand at the door and knock.* And therefore the grace of God is wanting to no one but, "as far as in it lies, communicates itself to all men." In another place he says: "It pertains to God's Providence to provide every one with what is necessary to salvation." Yes, says St. Augustine, "For He Who comes and knocks at the door always wishes to enter; but it is through us that He does not always go in, nor always remain."

What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? Was it that I expected that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes?—(Is. v. 4). Bellarmine says on these words: "If He had not given the power to bring forth grapes, how could God say *I expected?* And if God had not given to all men the grace necessary for salvation He could not have said to the Jews, *What is there that I ought to have done more?* for they could have answered that if they had not yielded fruit, *it was for lack of necessary assistance.* Bellarmine says the same on the words of our Lord: *How often would I have gathered together thy children, and thou wouldst not?*—(Matt. xxiii. 37). "How did He wish to be sought for by the unwilling, if He does not help them that they may be able to will."

We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple—(Ps. xlvii. 10). On this St. Bernard observes: "*Mercy is in the midst of the temple*, not in any hole or corner, because *there is no acceptance of persons with God*—(Rom. ii. 11); it is placed in public, it is offered to all, and no one is without it, except he who refuses it."

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to

nance?—(Rom. ii. 4). You see that it is through his n malice that the sinner is not converted, because despises the riches of the Divine Goodness, which ls him, and never ceases to move him to con- rsion by God's grace. God hates sin, but at the me time never ceases to love the sinful soul while it mains on earth, and always gives it the assistance it quires for salvation : *But thou sparest all because they e thine, O Lord, who lovest souls*—(Wis. xi. 27). ence we see, says Bellarmine, that God does not refuse ace to resist temptations to any sinner, however obsti- te and blinded he may be : " Assistance to avoid new is always at hand for all men, either immediately or ediately (i.e. by means of Prayer), so that they may k further aid from God, by the help of which they will oid sin." Here we may quote what God says by echiel : *As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the ath of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his y and live*—(Ezech. xxxiii. 11). St. Peter says the me : *He beareth patiently for your sakes, not lling that any should perish, but that all should return penance*—(2 Pet. iii. 9). If, therefore, God wishes at all should actually be converted, it must necessarily held that He gives to all the grace which they need for tual conversion.

Evening Meditation

HE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

" *Charity endureth all things.*"

HAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

It is an excellent practice also, in the moment of ptation, to make the Sign of the Cross on the fore-

head and breast. It is also of great service to reveal the temptation to our spiritual director. St. Philip Neri used to say that a temptation made known is half-conquered. Here it will be well to remark, what is unanimously admitted by all Theologians, even of the rigorist school, that persons who have during a considerable period of time been leading virtuous lives, and living habitually in the fear of God, whenever they are in doubt, and are not certain whether they have given consent to a grievous sin, ought to be perfectly assured that they have not lost the Divine grace; for it is morally impossible that the will, confirmed in her good purposes for a considerable lapse of time, should on a sudden undergo such a total change as at once to consent to a mortal sin without clearly knowing it. The reason of it is that mortal sin is so horrible a monster that it cannot possibly enter a soul by which it has long been held in abhorrence, without her being fully aware of it. We have proved this at length in our Moral Theology. St. Teresa says: No one is lost without knowing it; and no one is deceived without the will to be deceived.

II.

Wherefore, with regard to certain souls of delicate conscience, and solidly rooted in virtue, but at the same time timid and molested with temptations (especially if they be against faith or chastity), the director will find it sometimes expedient to forbid them to reveal or mention their temptations at all, for if they have to mention them, they are led to consider how such thoughts got into their minds, and whether they paused to dispute with them, or took any complacency in them, or gave any consent to them; and so, by this too great reflection, those evil imaginations make a still deeper impression on their minds and disturb them the more. And I find that St. Jane de Chantal acted precisely in this manner. She relates of herself that she was for several years assailed by the most violent storms of temptation, but had never spoken of them in confession, since she was not conscious of ever having yielded

to them; and in this she had only followed faithfully the rule received from her director. She says: "I never had a full conviction of having consented"; these words give us to understand that the temptations did produce in her some agitation from scruples; but in spite of these she resumed her tranquillity on the strength of the obedience imposed by her confessor, not to confess similar doubts. With this exception, it will be generally found an admirable means of quelling the violence of temptations to lay them open to our director, as we have said above.

Wednesday—Eighth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

CHRISTIANS IN HELL KNOW THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN ALL THE GRACES NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.

What cruel swords of anguish and remorse for the damned will the lights, the calls, and all the other graces be which they received from God in order to repent and be saved! They will say: "We might have become saints and happy for ever in Heaven, but now, alas, we must be forever miserable in hell!"

I.

What cruel swords of anguish for the damned will the lights, the calls, and all the other graces be which they received from God! They will say: "We might have been saints and happy for ever in Heaven; but now we must be forever miserable in hell!"

The greatest torment of the damned will be to reflect

that they are lost through their own fault, their own will, notwithstanding that Jesus Christ died to save them. "God," they will say, "gave His life for our salvation, and we fools, of our own free will, have cast ourselves into this furnace of fire to burn forever! Heaven lost! God lost! Ourselves eternally miserable!"

Such will be the eternal lamentations of the damned.

O my God, despised and forsaken by me, grant that I may find Thee whilst time yet remains for me to repent. For this end, grant me, O my Redeemer, to share in that sorrow which overwhelmed Thee in the Garden of Gethsemani for my sins. I am sorry above every evil for having offended Thee. Receive me into Thy favour, O Jesus, now that I promise to love Thee, and to love no other but Thee.

Represent to yourself a sick man in great pain and suffering, who has none to pity him, but many to load him with injuries, to reproach him with his disorders, and to ill-treat him with great rage. The damned are treated far worse. They suffer all kinds of torments, without the slightest compassion from anyone.

But, at least, cannot the damned love God Who justly punishes them? Ah, no; while they know that God is sovereignly amiable, they are constrained to hate Him. This is hell, not to be able to love the Sovereign Good, which is God.

If the damned could resign themselves to the Divine will, as pious souls in their sufferings are now able to do, hell would no longer be hell. But no; the damned shall rage like wild beasts under the scourge of Divine justice, and their rage shall serve but to increase their torments. If, then, O Jesus, I were in hell, I should be incapable of loving Thee, but have to hate Thee forever! And what evil hast Thou done me, for which I should hate Thee? Thou hast created me, Thou hast died for me; Thou hast bestowed upon me many special graces. These are the evils which Thou hast done me. Chastise me as Thou pleasest, but do not deprive me of the power of loving Thee. I love Thee, my Jesus, and I desire ever to love Thee.

II.

Consider the terror of the soul on its first entrance into hell: "Am I, then, really damned?" it will ask, "or is it all a hideous dream?" It will think whether there can be any remedy; but will find that there can be no remedy—none, for all eternity!

Millions of ages will pass away, as many ages as there are drops of water in the sea, or grains of sand on the earth, or leaves upon the trees; and hell will still be hell, eternity will still be only commencing!

At least, may not the damned be able to flatter themselves, saying: "Who knows but that hell may one day come to an end?" No, for in hell there can be no *who knows*? The damned will be most certain that all the torments which they suffer every moment will continue throughout eternity. O my God, do men believe in hell and yet commit sin?

All the greater will the torment of those be who often meditated on hell, and yet by sin condemned themselves to its torments. Ah, let us not lose time, but let us renounce sin and give ourselves to Jesus Christ! All that we can do to avoid hell will be but little. Let us be persuaded of this and tremble; he that trembles not will not be saved.

O my Jesus, Thy Precious Blood, Thy Death, are my hope! Let others abandon me, but do not Thou abandon me! I see that Thou hast not as yet abandoned me, since Thou still invitest me to pardon, if I will but repent of my sins, and Thou still offerest me Thy grace and Thy love if I will but love Thee. Yes, my Jesus, my Life, my Treasure, my Love, I will ever bewail my offences against Thee, and will ever love Thee with my whole heart. My God, if I have lost Thee, I will lose Thee no more. Tell me what Thou requirest of me, and I will endeavour to comply with Thy will in all things; grant that I may live and die in Thy grace, and then dispose of me as Thou pleasest. O Mary, my hope, be thou my protectress, and suffer me never again to lose my God.

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Spiritual Reading

PRAYER.

GOD GIVES THE GRACE OF SALVATION EVEN TO OBSTINATE SINNERS.

I know well that there are theologians who maintain that God refuses to certain obstinate sinners even sufficient grace. And, among others, they avail themselves of a passage of St. Thomas which says: "But although they who are in sin cannot through their own power help putting or interposing an obstacle to grace, unless they are aided by antecedent grace, as we have shown; nevertheless, this also is imputed to them as a sin, because this defect is left in them from previous sin—as a drunken man is not excused from murder committed in that drunkenness which was incurred by his own fault. Besides, although he who is in sin has it not in his own power that he may altogether avoid sin, yet he has power at this present moment to avoid this or that sin, as has been said; so that whatever he commits, he commits voluntarily, and therefore it is properly imputed to him as sin." From this they gather that St. Thomas intends to say that sinners can indeed avoid particular sins, but not all sins; because in punishment for sins previously committed they are deprived of all actual grace.

But we answer that here St. Thomas is not speaking at all of *actual*, but of *habitual* or *sanctifying grace*, without which the sinner cannot keep himself long from falling into new sins, as he teaches in several places. So that, in the first place, the intention of St. Thomas is not to prove that some sinners are deprived of all actual grace, and therefore, being unable to avoid all sin, they fall, and are all the same worthy of punishment; but his intention is to prove against the Pelagians that a man who remains *without sanctifying grace cannot abstain from sinning*. And this is the teaching of the Thomists in their comments on this passage.

And it is impossible that the holy Doctor could have

meant otherwise, since he elsewhere teaches that, on the one hand, God's grace is never wanting to any one; and, on the other hand, that there is no sinner so lost and abandoned by grace as not to be able to lay aside his obstinacy, and to unite himself to the will of God, which he certainly could not do without the assistance of grace: "During this life there is no man who cannot lay aside obstinacy of mind, and so conform to the Divine will."

In another place St. Thomas observes, on the text of St. Paul, *Who will have all men to be saved*: "Therefore the grace of God is wanting to no man; but, as far as it is concerned, it communicates itself to all."

Cardinal Gotti, confuting those who say that God keeps ready at hand the aids necessary for salvation, but as a matter of fact does not give them to all, asks: Of what use would it be to a sick man if the physician only kept the remedies *ready*, and then would not apply them? Then he concludes (quite to the point of our argument) that we must necessarily say: "God not only *offers*, but also *confers* on every individual, even on infidels and hardened sinners, *help sufficient to observe the Commandments*, whether it be proximate or remote."

Bellarmine makes a sound distinction on this point, and says that for avoiding fresh sins every sinner has at all times sufficient assistance, at least mediately: "The necessary and sufficient assistance for the avoidance of sin is given by God's goodness to all men at all times, either *immediately* or *mediately* . . . We say *or mediately* because it is certain that some men have not that help by which they can immediately avoid sin, but yet they have the help *which enables them to obtain from God greater safeguards, by the assistance of which they will avoid sin*." But as to the grace of conversion, he says that this is not given at every single moment to the sinner; but that no one will be ever so far left to himself "as to be surely and absolutely deprived of God's help through all this life, so as to have no hope of salvation."

And so say the theologians who follow St. Thomas.

Thus Soto : " I am absolutely certain, and I believe that all the holy Doctors who are worthy of the name were always most positive, that no one was ever deserted by God in this mortal life." And the reason is evident; for if the sinner were quite abandoned by grace, either his sins afterwards committed could no longer be imputed to him, or he would be under an obligation to do that which he had no power to do; but it is a positive rule of St. Augustine that there is never a sin in that which cannot be avoided : " No one sins in that which can by no means be avoided." This is in harmony with the teaching of the Apostle : *But God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will also make with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it*—(1 Cor. x. 13). And Primasius explains : " God will so order the issue that we shall be able to endure," that is, in temptation He will strengthen you with the help of His grace, so that you may be able to bear it. St. Augustine and St. Thomas go so far as to say that God would be unjust and cruel if He obliged any one to a command which he could not keep. St. Augustine says : " It is the deepest injustice to reckon any one guilty of sin for not doing that which he could not do." And St. Thomas : " God is not more cruel than man; but it is reckoned cruelty in a man to oblige a person by law to do that which he cannot fulfil; therefore we must by no means imagine this of God." " It is, however, different," he says, " when it is through his own neglect that he has not the grace to be able to keep the Commandments." This is the case when a man neglects to avail himself of the remote grace of Prayer, in order to obtain the proximate grace to enable him to keep the law, as the Council of Trent teaches : "God does not command impossibilities but by commanding admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask for that which is beyond your power, and by His help enables you to do it."

Other Fathers have taught the same doctrine. So St. Jerome : " We are not forced by necessity to be either virtuous or vicious; for where there is necessity,

there is neither condemnation nor crown." Tertullian : " For a law would not be given to him who had it not in his power to observe it duly." Marcus the Hermit : " Hidden grace assists us; but it depends on us to do or not to do according to our strength." So also St. Irenaeus, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Chrysostom, and others.

From all this several Theologians conclude that to say that God refuses to any one *sufficient help to enable him to keep the Commandments* would be contrary to the Faith, because in that case God would oblige us to impossibilities. So F. Nunez teaches : " God never refused aid sufficient to keep the Commandments, otherwise they could not be in any way fulfilled; and thus we should have the heresy of Luther back again, that God has obliged men to impossibilities." And in another place : " It is of Faith (so that the opposite doctrine is a manifest heresy) that every man, while he is alive, can do penance for his sins." And Father Ledesma : " It is a certain truth of Faith that that is not sin which is not in the free power of man."

Nor is it right to say that if the sinner is deprived of grace, he is deprived of it by his own fault and therefore though he is deprived of grace, yet he sins. For Cardinal Gotti well replies to this that God can justly punish the sinner for his previous faults, but not for future transgressions of precepts which he is no longer able to fulfil. If a servant, he says, were sent to a place, and if he, through his own fault, fell into a pit, his master might punish him for his carelessness in falling, and even for his subsequent disobedience, if means, such as a rope or ladder, were given him to get out of the pit, and he would not avail himself of them. But supposing that his master did not help him to get out, he would be a tyrant if he ordered him to proceed and punished him for not proceeding. Hence he concludes : " When, therefore, a man has by sin fallen into the ditch, and becomes unable to proceed on his way to eternal life, though God may punish him for this fault, and also if he refuses the offer of grace to enable him to proceed; yet if God chose

to leave him to his own weakness, He cannot without injustice oblige him to proceed on his way, or punish him for not proceeding."

Moreover, our opponents adduce many texts of Scripture where this abandonment is apparently expressed: *Blind the heart of this people . . . lest they see with their eyes . . . and be converted, and I heal them*—(Is. vi. 10). *We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her*—(Jer. li. 9). *Add thou iniquity upon their iniquity, and let them not come into thy justice*—(Ps. lxviii. 28). *For this cause God delivered them up to shamejul affections. He hath mercy on whom he will; and whom he will he hardeneth*—(Rom. i. 26; ix. 18), and others similar. But we can answer all these objections, and it is the answer usually given, that in the Holy Scriptures God is often said *to do* what He only *permits* (that is, does not prevent); so that if we would not blaspheme with Calvin, and say that God positively destines and determines some persons to sin, we must say that God *permits* some sinners, in penalty of their faults, to be, on the one hand, assailed by vehement temptations (which is the evil from which we pray God to deliver us when we say *Lead us not into temptation*)—(Matt. vi. 13), and, on the other hand, that they remain morally abandoned in their sin. Thus it is their conversion, and the resistance they make to temptation, although neither impossible nor desperate, is yet, through their faults and bad habits, very difficult; for, in such a state of laxity, they have only very rare and weak desires and attempts to resist their bad habits, and to regain the way of salvation. And this is the imperfect obstinacy of the hardened sinner which St. Thomas describes: "He is hardened who cannot easily co-operate in his escape from sin; and this is imperfect obstinacy, because a man may be obstinate in this life if he has a will so fixed upon sin that no impulses towards good arise, except very weak ones." On the one hand the mind is obscured, the will is hardened against God's inspirations, and attached to the pleasures of sense, so as to despise and feel

disgust for spiritual things, and the sensual passions and appetites reign in the soul through the bad habits that have been acquired. While on the other hand the illuminations and the callings of God are, by its own fault, rendered scarcely efficacious to move the soul, which has so depised them, and made so bad a use of them that it even feels a certain aversion towards them because it does not want to be disturbed in its sensual gratifications. All these things constitute *moral abandonment*; and when a sinner has once fallen into it, it is only with the utmost difficulty that he can escape from his miserable state, and bring himself to live a well-regulated life.

In order to escape, and pass at once from such a miserable state to a state of salvation, a great and extraordinary grace would be requisite; but God seldom confers such a grace on these obstinate sinners. To some He gives it, says St. Thomas, and chooses them for vessels of Mercy, as the Apostle calls them, in order to make known His Goodness; but to others He justly refuses it, and leaves them in their unhappy state, in order to show forth His Justice and Power: "Sometimes," says the Angel of the Schools, "out of the abundance of His Goodness He gives His assistance even to those who put a hindrance in the way of His grace, and converts them . . . And just as He does not enlighten all the blind, nor cure all the sick, so neither does He assist all who place an impediment to His grace, so as to convert them . . . This is what the Apostle means when He says that God, *to show forth his anger, and to make his power known, endured with much patience the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, that he might show the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy, which he hath prepared unto glory*—(Rom. ix. 22, 23)." Then he adds: "But since out of the number of those who are involved in the same sins there are some to whom God gives the grace of conversion, while others He endures, or allows to follow the ordinary course we are not to inquire the reason why He converts some and not others. For the Apostle says: *Has not the potter power over the clay, to make of the same mass*

one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?—(Rom. ix. 21)."

To bring this point to a conclusion—we do not deny that there is such a thing as the *moral abandonment of some obstinate sinners*, so that their conversion is morally impossible, that is to say, very difficult. And this concession is abundantly sufficient for the laudable object which our opponents have in defending their opinion, which is to restrain evil-doers, and to induce them to enter into themselves before they come to fall into such a deplorable state. But then it is cruelty, as Petrocorensis well says, to take from them all hope, and entirely to shut against them the way of salvation, by the doctrine that *they have fallen into so complete an abandonment as to be deprived of all actual grace to enable them to avoid fresh sins, and to be converted.* Even sinners have the means of Prayer, a grace not refused to any man while he lives, as we shall prove, whereby they can afterwards obtain abundant help for placing themselves in a state of salvation. The fear of total abandonment would not only lead them to despair, but also to give themselves up more completely to their vices, in the belief that they were altogether destitute of grace, and that they had no hope left of escaping eternal damnation.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Charity endureth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

But, I repeat, the most efficacious and the most necessary of all remedies against temptation, is that remedy of remedies, namely to pray to God for help, and to

continue praying as long as the temptation continues. Almighty God will frequently have decreed success, not to the first prayer, but to the second, third, or fourth. In short, we must be thoroughly persuaded that all our welfare depends on prayer: our change of life depends on prayer; our victory over temptations depends on prayer; on prayer depends our obtaining Divine love, together with perfection, perseverance, and eternal salvation. There may be some who, after the perusal of my spiritual works, will accuse me of tediousness in so often recommending the importance and necessity of having continual recourse to God by prayer. But I seem to myself to have said not too much but far too little. I know that day and night we are all assailed with temptations from the infernal powers, and that Satan lets slip no occasion of causing us to fall. I know that, without the Divine help, we have not strength to repel the assaults of the devils; and that therefore the Apostle exhorts us to put on the armour of God: *Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness*—(Eph. vi. 11, 12). And what is this armour with which St. Paul warns us to clothe ourselves in order to conquer our enemies? Behold in what it consists: *By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with all instance*—(Eph. vi. 18). This armour is constant and fervent prayer to God, that He may help us to gain the victory. I know, moreover, that in every page of the Holy Scriptures, both in the Old and New Testament, we are repeatedly admonished to pray: *Call upon me, and I will deliver thee*—(Ps. xlix. 15). *Cry to me and I will hear thee*—(Jer. xxxiii. 3). *We ought always to pray and not to faint*—(Luke xviii. 1). *Ask, and you shall receive*—(Matt. vii. 7). *Watch and pray*—(Mark xiii. 33). *Pray without ceasing*—(1 Thess. v. 17). So that I think, far from having spoken too much on prayer, I have not said enough.

II.

I would urge it on all preachers to recommend nothing so much to the people as prayer; on confessors, to insist on nothing so earnestly with their penitents as prayer; on spiritual writers, to treat of no subject more copiously than on prayer. But it is a source of grief to my heart, and it seems to me a chastisement of our sins, that so many preachers, confessors, and authors speak so little of prayer. There is no doubt that sermons, meditations, communions, and mortifications are great helps in the spiritual life; but if we fail to call upon God by prayer in the moment of temptation, we shall fall, in spite of all the sermons, meditations, communions, penances, and virtuous resolutions. If, then, we really wish to be saved, let us aways pray, and commend ourselves to Jesus Christ, and most of all when we are tempted; and let us not only pray for the grace of holy perseverance, but at the same time for the grace to pray always. Let us, likewise, take care to recommend ourselves to the Divine Mother, who, as St. Bernard says, is the dispenser of graces: "Let us seek for graces, and let us seek them through Mary." For the same Saint assures us that it is the will of God, that not a single grace should be dealt to us except through the hands of Mary: "God has willed us to receive nothing that has not passed through the hands of Mary."

O Jesus, my Redeemer, I trust in Thy Blood, that Thou has forgiven me all my offences against Thee; and I fondly hope to come one day to bless Thee for it eternally in Heaven: *The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.* I plainly see now that I have over and over again fallen in times past from the want of entreating Thee for holy perseverance. I earnestly beg Thee at this present moment to grant me perseverance: *Never suffer me to be separated from Thee.* And I propose to make this prayer to Thee always; but especially when I am tempted to offend Thee. I indeed make this resolution and promise; but what will it profit me thus to resolve and promise if Thou dost not give me the grace to run and cast myself at Thy feet? By the merits, then, of Thy Sacred

Passion, oh, grant me this grace, in all my necessities to have recourse to Thee. O Mary, my Queen and my Mother, I beseech thee, by thy tender love for Jesus Christ, to procure me the grace of always fleeing for succour, as long as I live, to thy blessed Son and to thee.

Thursday—Eighth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

OUR INGRATITUDE TOWARDS JESUS CHRIST.

O ye sons of men, why do you not love Jesus Christ? Tell me, what more could He have done to make you love Him? If the vilest of mankind had suffered for us the torments Jesus Christ suffered, could we help giving him all our affection and showing him our gratitude?

I.

O my Jesus, what greater proof of Thy love couldst Thou have given me, than the sacrificing of Thy life upon the disgraceful gibbet of the Cross, to make satisfaction for my sins, and to conduct me with Thee into Paradise?

He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross—(Phil. ii. 8). The Son of God, therefore, for the love of man, obedient to His Eternal Father, Whose will it was that He should die for our salvation, humbled Himself to die, and to die on a Cross! And are there men to be found who believe this and love not such a God!

O Jesus, how much has it cost Thee to make me understand Thy burning love for me; and I have basely repaid Thee with ingratitude. Oh, accept me now and

suffer me to love Thee, since I will no more abuse Thy love. I love Thee, my Sovereign Good, and desire to love Thee forever. Remind me continually of the pains Thou didst suffer for me, that I may never forget the love I owe Thee.

O God, the Passion of Jesus Christ is spoken of, and is listened to as though it were a fable, or story about the sufferings and death of someone unknown to us, or something that did not concern us at all!

O ye sons of men, why do ye not love Jesus Christ? Tell me, what more could our Blessed Redeemer have done to make us love Him than to die in the midst of humiliations and torments?

If the vilest of mankind had suffered for us the torments Jesus Christ suffered, could we help giving him our affection and showing him our gratitude?

But, my Jesus, why do I speak of the ingratitude of others and not rather of my own? What has hitherto been my conduct towards Thee? Alas, I have repaid Thy love only with offences against Thee!

Pardon me, O Jesus! From this day, I desire to love Thee, and to love Thee much. I should be too ungrateful, if, after so many favours and mercies, I loved Thee but little.

II.

Let us reflect that this Man of Sorrows, nailed to the disgraceful wood of the Cross, is our true God, and suffers and dies there for no other motive but for love of us.

Do we, then, believe that Jesus Christ crucified is our God, and really dies for us, and can we love aught but Jesus crucified?

O beautiful flames of love which consumed the life of my Saviour on Calvary, come and consume in me all worldly affections! Cause me ever to burn with love for such a God, Who was pleased to die and to sacrifice Himself entirely for the love of me.

What a spectacle for the Angels of Heaven to behold the Divine Word fastened to a gibbet, and dying for the salvation of us, His miserable creatures!

O my Saviour, Thou hast not refused me Thy Blood and Thy life, and shall I refuse Thee the affection of my heart? Shall I refuse Thee anything Thou askest of me? No, my Jesus! Thou hast given Thy whole Self to me, and I will give my whole self without reserve to Thee.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER.

GOD GIVES TO ALL MEN THE GRACE TO PRAY.

We have proved that God wishes all men to be saved, and that, as far as He is concerned, He gives to all the graces necessary for their salvation. We say, moreover, that all men have given to them the grace to enable them actually to pray without needing a further grace, and by Prayer to obtain all further aid necessary for the observance of the Commandments and for salvation. But it must be remarked that when we say, "without needing a further grace," we do not mean that the common grace gives the power of Prayer without the aid of *assisting grace,* since, in order to exercise any act of piety, besides the *exciting grace,* there is undoubtedly required the *assisting* or *co-operating grace.* But we mean that the common grace gives every man the power of actual Prayer, *without a further preventing grace* to determine, physically or morally, the will of man to exercise the act of Prayer. We will therefore:

First mention the famous Theologians who teach this doctrine as certain;

Secondly, examine the proofs of this doctrine

(*a*) from Scripture,

(*b*) the Council of Trent,

(*c*) and the Fathers;

Thirdly, examine the theological arguments which prove it.

I.—THE FAMOUS THEOLOGIANS WHO TEACH THIS DOCTRINE.

It is held by Isambert, Cardinal du Perron, Alphonsus le Moyne, and others whom we shall presently quote, and especially by Honoratus Tourneley, who treats the matter fully. All these authors prove that every man, by means of the ordinary sufficient grace alone, can actually pray without need of further aid, and by Prayer can obtain all the graces requisite for the performance of the most difficult things.

It was also held by Cardinal Noris, who proves the proposition that man, when the Commandment urges, can pray if he will; and he proves it in this way: Assuming that, in order to keep the Commandments and to be saved, Prayer is necessary, as we proved in the beginning when we spoke of the Necessity of Prayer, this learned author says that every one has the proximate power of Prayer, in order that by Prayer he may obtain the proximate power to do good; and therefore all can pray with only the ordinary grace, without other assistance. Otherwise, he argues, if, in order to obtain the proximate power for the act of Prayer we require another power, we should still want another power of grace to obtain this power, and so on *ad infinitum,* and it would no longer be in the power of man to co-operate in his salvation.

The same author held it as certain that in the present state all men have the assistance *sine qua non,* i.e., ordinary grace, which, without need of further assistance, produces Prayer, by which we can then obtain efficacious grace to enable us to observe the Law. And hence we can easily understand the axiom universally received in the Schools: "*Facienti quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam.*" *To him who does what in him lies, God does not refuse His grace.* That is, to the man who prays, and thus makes good use of the sufficient grace which enables him to do such *an easy thing as to pray,* God does not refuse the efficacious grace to enable him to execute *difficult things.*

Thus also, Louis Thomassin, who says that "sufficient grace," to be really *sufficient,* ought to give a man the proximate and ready power to execute a good act. But if, in order to perform such an act, another grace—namely, efficacious grace—is needed, and a man has not, at least, mediately, this efficacious grace which is necessary for salvation, how can it be said that the "sufficient grace" gives him this proximate and ready power? But Saint Thomas says: "God does not neglect to do that which is necessary to salvation." It is true, of course, that God is not bound to give us His grace, because what is gratis is not of obligation; but, on the other hand, supposing that He gives us Commandments, He is obliged to give us the assistance necessary for observing them. And as God does oblige us actually to observe every precept whenever it applies, so ought He also actually to supply us (at least mediately or remotely) with the assistance necessary for the observance of the precept, without the necessity of a further grace which is not common to all. Hence Thomassin concludes that in order to reconcile the proposition that *sufficient grace* is enough for a man's salvation with the statement that *efficacious grace* is requisite to observe the whole Law, it is necessary to say that *sufficient grace is enough to pray,* and to perform similar *easy acts,* and that by means of these we then *obtain efficacious grace to fulfil the difficult acts.* And this is without doubt in conformity with the doctrine of St. Augustine, who teaches: "By the very fact that it is most firmly believed that the just and good God does not command impossibilities, we are admonished both what to do in easy things, and in difficult things what to ask for." On this passage Cardinal Noris observes: "Therefore, we are able to do easy or less perfect works without asking God for further help; for which, however, we must pray in more difficult works." Thomassin also brings forward the authority of St. Bonaventure, Scotus, and others on this subject, and says that all these considered sufficient graces to be truly sufficient, whether the will consents to them or not. And this he demonstrates in four parts of his book,

adducing the authorities of the Schoolmen for a long series of years beginning from the year 1100.

Habert, Bishop of Vabres and Doctor of the Sorbonne, who was the first to write against Jansenius, says : "We think, first, that sufficient grace has only a contingent or mediate connection with the actual effect of the complete consent . . . We think, further, that 'sufficient grace' is a grace that disposes for efficacious grace, since from a good use of it God afterwards grants to the created will the grace that performs the complete effect." He had said before that "all Catholic Doctors have professed, and do profess, that a real inward grace is given, which is capable of persuading the will to consent to good, though, on account of the free resistance of the will, it sometimes does not persuade it thus to consent"; and for this doctrine he quotes Gamaches, Duval, Isambert, Perez, Le Moyne, and others. Then he proceeds : "The assistance, therefore, of sufficient grace disposes us for the reception of efficacious grace, and is in some sort efficacious, namely, of an incomplete effect, obtained first remotely, then more nearly, and at last proximately —such as is an Act of Faith, Hope, Love . . . and amongst all these, of Prayer. Hence the famous Alphonsus Le Moyne taught that this sufficient grace was the grace of asking or of Prayer, of which St. Augustine so often speaks." So that, according to Habert, the difference between efficacious and sufficient grace is that the former produces its effect completely while the latter produces it either contingently (that is, *sometimes*, but *not always*), or mediately (that is, by means of Prayer). Moreover, he says that sufficient grace, according to the good use we make of it, prepares us to obtain efficacious grace; hence he calls sufficient grace "in some sort efficacious" (*secundum quid*), because of its effect commenced but not completed. Lastly, he says that sufficient grace is the grace of Prayer, of which it is in our power to avail ourselves, as St. Augustine teaches. So that a man has no excuse if he does not do that which he already has sufficient grace to enable him to perform, seeing that without further assistance he has the suffi-

cient grace either to act, or at least obtain more help to enable him to act. And Habert asserts that this was the common doctrine of the Sorbonne.

Charles du Plessis d'Argentré, another Theologian of the Sorbonne, quotes more than a thousand Theologians who teach expressly that with sufficient grace easy works are accomplished, and that a man who makes use of it obtains thereby more abundant assistance for his thorough conversion. And precisely in this sense, as we have already explained, he says the celebrated axiom of the Schools is to be understood : "To those who do what is in their power" (by means of sufficient grace) "God does not deny grace"; that is, more abundant and efficacious grace.

The learned Dionysius Petavius proves at great length that man works with simple sufficient grace; and he even says that it would be monstrous to assert the contrary, and that this is the doctrine not only of Theologians, but also of the Church. Hence, he says, the grace of observing the precepts follows Prayer; and that the gift of Prayer is given by God at the time when He imposes the precept. So that as the Law is imposed upon all, the gift of Prayer is given to all.

The author of the *Theology for the Use of the Seminary of Peterkau* says that with sufficient grace alone a "man can act well, and sometimes does act well"; so that "there is nothing to hinder that, of two persons furnished with equal graces, one should perform the easier acts (which very often precede full conversion), the other should not." And this, he says, is in conformity with the doctrine of St. Augustine, and also of St. Thomas and his first disciples, notably Father Bartholomew Medina, who says that sometimes a man is converted with sufficient grace alone. And I find that also Father Louis of Granada asserts this to be the common doctrine of Theologians : "Theologians reckon two kinds of assistance—one *sufficient,* the other more *than sufficient*; by the former men are sometimes converted and sometimes refuse to be converted." And he adds : "And Theologians define how universally this

assistance is open to men." "Thus," says the *Theology of Peterkau,* "a man can perform some acts of piety, such as pray to God humbly, with the aid of sufficient grace alone, and sometimes actually does perform them, and so prepares himself for further graces." This, it adds, is the order of God's Providence with regard to graces, "that the succeeding should follow the good use of the former." And it concludes that thorough conversion and final perseverance "are infallibly obtained by Prayer, for which the sufficient grace which is given to every one abundantly suffices . . ."

Richard of St. Victor similarly teaches that there is a sufficient grace to which a man sometimes consents and which he sometimes resists.

Dominic Soto asks: "Why of two persons whom God is most ready and desirous to convert, one is drawn by grace, and the other is not?" And he answers: "No other reason can be given, except that one consents and co-operates, while the other does not co-operate." . . .

Cardinal Gotti in one place of his *Theology* apparently agrees with us; for when discussing how it is that a man can persevere if he will, when it is not in his power to have the special assistance which is requisite for perseverance, he says that although this special assistance is not in a man's power, "yet it is said to be in a certain sense in a man's power, because he can by the grace of God ask for it and obtain it; and in this way it may be said to be in a man's power to have the assistance necessary for perseverance, because it can be obtained by prayer." But to verify the proposition that it is in a man's power to persevere, it is necessary to grant both that he can, without needing any further grace, obtain by Prayer the assistance requisite for perseverance; and also, that with only the sufficient grace common to all, without need of any special grace he can actually pray, and by Prayer obtain perseverance; otherwise it could not be said that every man had the grace necessary for perseverance, at least remotely or mediately, by means of Prayer.

But if Cardinal Gotti did not so understand it, at any

rate this is what St. Francis de Sales teaches when he says that the grace of actual Prayer is given to everyone who will avail himself of it, and thence concludes that perseverance is in the power of everybody. The Saint says this clearly in his *Treatise on the Love of God,* where, after proving that constant Prayer is necessary to obtain from God the gift of final perseverance, he adds, that as the gift of Prayer is freely granted to all those who will consent to the heavenly inspirations, it is consequently in our power to persevere.

Cardinal Bellarmine teaches the same thing. He says: "Assistance, then and there sufficient for salvation, is given mediately or immediately to all men . . . We say mediately or immediately, because to those who have the use of reason we believe that holy inspirations are given by God, and that by these they have immediately the exciting grace, by which, if they will acquiesce in it, they can be disposed to be justified, and at last to obtain salvation."

Evening Meditation

"Charity endureth all things."

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

St. Francis de Sales says: "It is a mistake to estimate devotion by the consolations which we feel. True devotion in the way of God consists in having a determined will to execute all that is pleasing to God." Almighty God is wont to make use of aridities in order to draw closer to Him His most cherished souls. Attachment to our own inordinate inclinations is the greatest obstacle to true union with God. When, therefore, God intends to draw a soul to His perfect love, He

endeavours to detach her from all affection to created goods. Thus His first care is to deprive her of temporal goods, of worldly pleasures, of property, honours, friends, relations, and bodily health; by the like means, that is, of losses, troubles, neglect, bereavements, and infirmities, He extirpates by degrees all earthly attachment, in order that the affections may be set on Him alone.

II.

With a view to produce a longing for spiritual things God regales the soul at first with great consolations, with an abundance of tears and tenderness. She is thus easily weaned from the gratifications of sense, and seeks further to mortify herself with works of penance, fasts, *cilices,* and disciplines. At this stage the director must keep a check on her, and not allow her to practise mortifications—at least not all those for which she asks permission—because, under the spur of this sensible devotion, a soul might easily ruin her health by indiscretion. It is a subtle artifice of the devil, when he beholds a person giving himself up to God, and receiving the consolations and caresses which God generally gives to beginners, to do his utmost to plunge him into the performance of such immoderate penances as utterly to destroy his health; so that afterwards, because of bodily weakness, he not only gives up the mortifications, but prayer, Communion, and all exercises of devotion, and eventually sinks gack into his old way of living. On this account, the director should be very sparing in allowing mortifications to those who are only just entering upon the spiritual life, and who desire to practise bodily mortifications. Let him exhort them to practise rather interior mortification by bearing patiently with affronts and contradictions, by obedience to superiors, by bridling the curiosity to see, to hear, and the like; and let him tell them that, when they have acquired the good habit of practising these interior mortifications, they will then be sufficiently perfect to proceed to the external. It would be, of course, a serious error to say, as some say, that external mortifications are of little or no use. With-

out doubt, interior mortification is most requisite for perfection; but it does not follow from this that external mortifications are unnecessary. St. Vincent de Paul declared that the person who did not practise external mortifications would be mortified neither interiorly nor exteriorly. And St. John of the Cross declared that the director who despised external mortifications was unworthy of confidence, even though he should work miracles.

Friday—Eighth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR US DEMANDS OUR LOVE.

My soul, consider thy God crucified and dying on Calvary. See how much He suffers, and say to Him: Why, O Jesus, why dost Thou love me so much, and why art Thou so much tormented and afflicted on the Cross? Oh, Thou wouldst be less afflicted didst Thou love me less!

1.

My soul, consider thy God crucified and dying on Calvary. See how much He suffers, and say to Him: Why, O Jesus, why dost Thou love me so much, and why art Thou so much tormented and afflicted on the Cross? Oh, Thou wouldst be less afflicted, didst Thou love me less!

Ah, my dear Redeemer, what a multitude of sorrows, ignominies, and afflictions torment Thee upon the

Cross! Thy most sacred body hangs from three nails, and rests only on Thy Wounds; the people who surround Thee deride and blaspheme Thee; and Thy immaculate soul is much more afflicted than Thy body. Tell me, why dost Thou suffer so much? Thou answerest me: I suffer all for the love of thee; remember, then, the affection I have borne thee, and love Me.

Yes, my Jesus, I will love Thee. And whom shall I love, if not my God Who dies for me? Hitherto I have despised Thee, but now my greatest grief is the remembrance of my offences against Thee, and I desire nothing but to be entirely Thine. O my Jesus, pardon me, and draw my heart to Thee; pierce and inflame it through and through with Thy love.

Let us consider how loving were the sentiments with which Jesus Christ presented His hands and feet to be nailed to the Cross, offering at the same time His Divine life to His Eternal Father for our salvation. My beloved Saviour, when I think how much my soul cost Thee, I cannot despair of pardon. However great and numerous my sins, I will not despair of being saved, since Thou hast already superabundantly satisfied for me. My Jesus, my Hope, and my Love, as much as I have offended thee, so much will I love Thee: I have exceedingly offended Thee, I desire also to love Thee exceedingly. Thou Who givest me this desire, help me.

Eternal Father, *look on the face of thy Christ*—(Ps. lxxxiii. 10). Behold Thy dying Son upon the Cross; look on that livid countenance, that head crowned with thorns, those hands pierced with nails, that body all bruised and wounded; behold the Victim sacrificed for me, Whom I now present to Thee, and have pity on me!

II.

He hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood—(Apoc. i. 5). Why should we fear that our sins will hinder us from becoming saints, when Jesus Christ has made for us a bath of His own Blood to wash our souls of every stain? It is sufficient that we repent of our sins and desire to amend.

Jesus, on the Cross, had us in His thoughts, and there prepared for us all those graces and mercies He now bestows upon us, with as much love as though He had to save only the soul of one of us in particular.

O my Saviour, Thou didst foresee upon the Cross the offences I should commit against Thee, and instead of punishments Thou didst prepare for me lights, loving calls, and pardon. O my Jesus, shall I ever again, after so many graces, offend Thee and separate myself from Thee? O my Lord, permit it not! Grant that I may die rather than cease to love Thee. I will say to Thee, with St. Francis de Sales: "Either to die, or to love! Either to love, or to die!"

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER.

GOD GIVES TO ALL MEN THE GRACE TO PRAY.

II.—FURTHER PROOFS.

(*a*) *From Holy Scripture.*

We have first the authority of the Apostle St. Paul, who assures us that God is faithful, and will not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength, since He always gives us assistance (either immediate or mediate, by means of Prayer) to resist the assaults of our enemies: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it* —(1 Cor. x. 13). Jansenius says that this text refers only to the predestined, but this comment of his is completely unfounded; for St. Paul is writing to *all the faithful* of Corinth, whom he certainly did not consider to be all predestined. So that St. Thomas has

good reason for understanding it generally of *all men*, and for saying that God would not be faithful if He did not grant us, so far as in Him lies, those graces by means of which we can obtain salvation. It is proved, moreover, by all those texts in which God exhorts us to be converted, and to have recourse to Him for the graces necessary for our salvation, and promises to hear us when we have recourse to Him. *Wisdom preacheth aloud . . . saying, O children, how long will ye love childishness, and fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves . . .? Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will utter my spirit to you . . . Because I called, and you refused . . . I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock*—(Prov. i. 22-26).

This exhortation, *Turn ye*, would be simple mockery, says Bellarmine, if God did not give to sinners at least the mediate assistance of Prayer for their conversion. Besides, we find in the passage, *Behold, I will utter my spirit to you*, mention made of the internal grace by which God calls sinners, and gives them actual assistance for conversion, if they will accept it. And again : *Come to me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you*—(Matt. xi. 28). *Come and accuse me, saith the Lord; if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow*—(Is. i. 18). *Ask, and it shall be given you*—(Matt. vii. 7). And so on in innumerable other texts already quoted. Now, if God did not give every one grace actually to have recourse to Him and actually to pray to Him, all these invitations and exhortations would be vain.

(*b*) *From the Council of Trent.*

It is clearly proved from the words of the Council of Trent. I beg the reader to give his best attention to this proof, which, if I am not mistaken, is perfectly decisive. There were innovators who asserted that man was deprived of free-will by the sin of Adam, and that the will of man at present has no share in good actions, but is induced to receive them passively from God, with-

out producing them itself; and hence they inferred that the observance of the Commandments was impossible to those who were not efficaciously moved and predetermined by grace to avoid evil and to do good. Against this error the Council pronounced sentence in words borrowed from St. Augustine: "Deus impossibilia non jubet; sed jubendo monet, et facere quod possis, et petere quod non possis; et adjuvat ut possis." "God does not command impossible things; but by commanding, admonishes you both to do what you can, and to pray for what you cannot do; and He helps you so that you may be able . . ."

So that, according to the Council, the Divine precepts are possible to all men, at least by the assistance of Prayer, by which greater help may be obtained to enable men to observe them. If, therefore, God has imposed His Commandments on all men, and has rendered their observance possible to all, at least mediately by means of Prayer, we must necessarily conclude that all men have the grace to enable them to pray, for the Commandments would not be possible to them without this grace. And as God grants to Prayer actual grace to do good, and thereby renders all His Commandments possible, so also He gives all actual grace to pray; for if there were any man who had not actual grace to pray to God, the Commandments would be impossible, as he could by no means, not even by Prayer, obtain the assistance necessary for their observance.

This being laid down, it cannot be said that the words, *God admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask for what you cannot do,* are only to be understood of the *power to pray,* not of *actual* Prayer; because, we reply, if the common and ordinary grace gave only the *power to pray* but not the power of *actually Praying,* the Council would not have said: "*He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask for what you cannot do,*" but rather, *He admonishes you that you can do, and that you can pray.* Moreover, if the Council had not intended to declare that every one can observe the precepts, or can pray to obtain grace to observe them,

and had not meant to speak of actual grace, it would not have said "*He admonishes,*" because this word properly refers to actual operation, and denotes not the instruction of the mind, but the movement of the will to do that good which it can actually do. When, therefore, the Council said: "*He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask for what you cannot do,*" it most clearly expressed, not only *possible* operation and *possible* Prayer, but *actual* operation and *actual* Prayer. For if man had need of another extraordinary grace, which as yet he has not, in order actually to work or actually to pray, how could God admonish him to do or to ask that which he cannot actually either do or ask without efficacious grace? Father Fortuanto Brescia speaks wisely on his point: "If the actual grace of Prayer were not given to all, but if for Prayer we had need of efficacious grace, which is not common to all, Prayer would be impossible to many who are without this efficacious grace; so that it could not be rightly said that 'God admonishes you to ask for that which you cannot do,' because He would then admonish us to do a thing requiring a grace which we did not possess. Therefore, God's admonition *to do* and *to pray* must be understood of actual operation and Prayer, without need of a further extraordinary grace." And this is exactly what St. Augustine means when he says: "Hence we are admonished in easy things what *to do,* and in difficult things what *to pray for*"; for he supposes that though all have not grace to enable them to do difficult things, all have at least grace to pray, because Prayer is an easy thing for everybody, as he also propounds in the words afterwards adopted by the Council of Trent: "*God admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask for what you cannot do.*"

To recapitulate the argument: the Council says that God does not impose impossible Commands, because He either gives assistance to observe them, or gives the grace of Prayer to obtain that assistance, which He always grants when it is prayed for. Now, if it could ever be true that God does not give all men grace, at

least the mediate grace of Prayer, actually to observe all His Precepts, Jansenius' *Proposition* would be true, that even the just man is without grace to enable him actually to observe some of the Commandments.

I do not know how else the text of the Council of Trent which I have cited, can be understood and explained, unless "sufficient grace" gives to all men the power of *actually praying* without the "efficacious grace" which our opponents suppose to be necessary for the actual performance of any pious work. And supposing the necessity of a further grace for actual Prayer, I cannot understand how this other text of the same Council can be true: "*God does not leave those who have been once justified by His grace, unless they first leave Him.*" If, I argue, the ordinary sufficient grace would not be enough for actual Prayer, but that for this purpose efficacious grace, which is not common to all men, should be required, it would follow that when the just man would be tempted to commit his first mortal sin, and God would not give him efficacious grace at least to enable him to pray, and so obtain strength to resist, his succumbing to temptation might be said to result rather from the just man being abandoned by God than that he had abandoned God, seeing that he was left without the efficacious grace necessary to enable him to resist.

(*c*) *From the Holy Fathers.*

In the next place, our opinion is proved from the words of the holy Fathers.

St. Basil says: "When, however, any one is allowed to fall into temptation, it must issue that he may be able to endure it, and to ask in Prayer that the will of God may be done." The Saint, then, teaches that when God permits a man to be tempted, He does it in order that the man may resist by asking for the Divine Will, i.e., the grace to overcome. He therefore supposes that when a man has not sufficient assistance to overcome the temptation, he at least has the actual and common grace of Prayer, by which he may obtain whatever further grace he needs.

St. John Chrysostom says that God gave a law which would make the wounds manifest, in order that men may desire a physician. And again : " Nor can any one be excused who, by ceasing to pray, has voluntarily abstained from overcoming his adversary." If such a man had not the grace necessary for actual Prayer, whereby he might obtain grace to resist, he might excuse himself when he is overcome.

So also St. Bernard : " Who are we, or what is our strength? This is what God wanted, that we, seeing our weakness, and that we have no other help, should with all humility have recourse to His Mercy." God, then, has imposed on us a Law impossible by our own strength, in order that we should go to Him, and by Prayer obtain strength to observe it; but if to any one was denied the grace of actual Prayer, to him the Law would be utterly impossible. " Many persons," says the same St. Bernard, " complain that they are deserted by grace; but grace could much more justly complain of being deserted by them."

But no Father is more clear on this point than St. Augustine, and that in many places. In one place he says : " The Pelagians think themselves very learned when they say, 'God would not command that which He knows man could not do.' Who is ignorant of this? But God does command some things that we cannot do, in order that we may know that for which we ought to ask Him."

Again : " It is not reckoned your fault, if you are ignorant without wishing to be so, but only if you neglect to inquire into that of which you are ignorant; nor that you do not cure your wounded members, but that you despise Him Who is willing to heal you. These are your own sins; for no man is deprived of the knowledge of how to seek with advantage." So that, according to St. Augustine, no one is deprived of the grace of Prayer, whereby he may obtain grace for his conversion; otherwise, if this grace were wanting, it could not be his fault if he were not converted.

Again St. Augustine says : " What else, then, is shown us but that it is God that gives the power to ask, and to seek, and to knock, Who commands us to do these things ?"

Again : " Once for all, receive this and understand it. Art thou not yet drawn ? Pray that thou mayest be drawn."

Again the Saint says : " That the soul, then, knows not what it should do comes from this, that it has not yet received it ; but will receive this also, if it has made a good use of what it has received ; and it has received power to seek piously and diligently if it will."

Mark the words " it has received power to seek diligently and piously." Every one, then, has the grace necessary for Prayer, and if he makes a good use of this, he will receive grace to do that which before he was unable to do immediately. Again : " Let the man who may be willing, but may not be able to do what he wills, pray that he may have such a measure as suffices for fulfilling the Commandments ; thus is he assisted so as to be able to do what is commanded."

Again St. Augustine says : " He gives us Commandments for this reason, that when we have tried to do what we are commanded, and are wearied through our infirmity, we may know how to ask the help of grace." Here the Saint supposes that with ordinary grace we are not able to do difficult things, but can by means of Prayer obtain the aid necessary to accomplish them . . . When, therefore, St. Augustine says that man is unable to fulfil the whole Law, and that Prayer is the only means given him to obtain help to fulfil it, he certainly supposes that God gives every man the grace of actual Prayer without need of a further extraordinary aid, not common to all men . . .

But there are two texts of St. Augustine which have particular bearing on the point.

The first is this : " It is certain that we can keep the Commandments if we will ; but since the will is prepared by God, we must ask Him that we may have such a will as is sufficient to enable us to perform what we will."

Here he says that it is certain we could observe the Law if we would; on the other hand, he says that in order to will to do so, and actually to do so, we must pray. Therefore all men have grace given them to pray, and by Prayer to obtain the abundant grace which enables us to keep the Commandments; otherwise, if for actual Prayer, efficacious grace, which is not common to all, were requisite, those to whom it was not given would not be able to keep the Commandments, nor to have the will to keep them.

The second text is that in which the holy Doctor answers the monks of Adramyttium, who spoke thus: If grace is necessary, and if we can do nothing without it, why blame us when we cannot act, and have not grace to act? You should rather pray God for us, that He may give us this grace. St. Augustine answers: You must be blamed, not because you do not act when you have not strength, but because you do not pray to obtain strength. "He who will not be admonished, and says, 'Do you rather pray for me,' must on that very account be admonished to do it (i.e. to pray) for himself." Now if the Saint did not believe that every man had grace to pray (if he so will) without need of further aid, he never could have said that these people were to be blamed for not praying; for they could have answered that if they were not to be blamed for not doing a thing when they had not special grace to enable them to do it, so they could not be blamed for not praying when they had not special grace for actual Prayer. This is what St. Augustine elsewhere says: "Let them not deceive themselves who say: 'Why are we commanded to abstain from evil and do good if it is God Who works in us both to will and to do it?'" And he answers that when men do good they should thank God for it, Who gives them strength to do it; "but when they do it not," he says, "let them pray that they may receive that which as yet they have not." Now, if these people had not even the grace for the act of Prayer, they might answer "Why are we commanded to pray if God does not work in us to make us pray?" How

are we to have the will to pray if we do not receive the grace necessary for actual Prayer?

St. Thomas is not speaking of Prayer expressly, but assumes the certainty of our Proposition, when he says: "It belongs to God's Providence to provide every individual with what is necessary for salvation, provided he puts no impediment in the way." Since, then, it is true, on the one hand, that God gives to all men the graces necessary for salvation, and, on the other, that we require for Prayer the grace which enables us actually to pray, and thereby to obtain further and greater assistance to enable us to do that which we cannot compass with ordinary grace—it follows, necessarily, that God gives all men sufficient grace actually to pray if they will, without need of efficacious grace.

Here we may add the answer of Bellarmine to the heretics who inferred from the text, *No one can come to me, unless my Father draw him*—(Jo. vi. 44), that no one could go to God who was not properly drawn by Him. "We answer," he says, "that the only conclusion from this text is that all men have not the efficacious grace to make them really believe; but we cannot conclude that all men have not at least the assistance which confers the possibility of believing, or, at any rate, the possibility of asking for grace."

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

The soul, then, in the commencement of her conversion to God, tastes the sweetness of those sensible

consolations with which God seeks to allure her, and by them to wean her from earthly pleasures; she breaks off her attachment to creatures, and becomes attached to God. Still, her attachment is imperfect, inasmuch as it is fostered more by that sensibility of spiritual consolations than by the real wish to do what is pleasing to God; and she deceives herself by believing that the greater the pleasure she feels in her devotions, the more she loves Almighty God. The consequence of this is that if this food of spiritual consolation is stopped, by her being taken from her ordinary exercises of devotion, and employed in other works of obedience, charity, or duties of her state, she is disturbed, and takes it greatly to heart: and this is a universal defect in our miserable human nature, to seek our own satisfaction in all that we do. Or again, when she no longer finds this sweet relish of devotion in her exercises, she either forsakes them or lessens them, and continuing to lessen them from day to day, she at length omits them entirely. And this misfortune befalls many souls who, when called by Almighty God to love Him, enter upon the way of perfection, and as long as spiritual sweetness lasts, make a certain progress; but alas! when this is no longer tasted, they leave off all, and resume their former ways. But it is of the highest importance to be fully persuaded that the love of God and perfection do not consist in feelings of tenderness and consolation, but in overcoming self-love and in following the Divine Will. St. Francis de Sales says: "God is as worthy of our love when He afflicts us as when He consoles us."

I do love Thee, my Sovereign Good; I love Thee with my whole heart; I love Thee more than myself; I love Thee, and have no other desire than to love Thee. I own that this my good-will is the pure effect of Thy grace; but do Thou, O my Lord, perfect Thy own work; withdraw not Thy helping hand till death! Oh, never for a moment leave me in my own hands; give me strength to vanquish temptations and to overcome myself; and for this end give me grace always to have recourse to Thee!

II.

Amid these consolations, it requires no remarkable degree of virtue to forego sensible delights, and to endure affronts and contradictions. The soul in the midst of these sweetnesses can endure all things; but this endurance comes far more frequently from those sensible consolations than from the strength of true love of God. On this account the Lord, with a view to give her a solid foundation in virtue, retires from her, and deprives her of that sensible devotion, that He may rid her of all attachment to self love, which was fed by such consolations. And hence it happens that whereas formerly she felt a joy in making acts of offering, of confidence, and love, now that the stream of consolation is dried up she makes these acts with a coldness and painful effort, and finds a weariness in the most pious exercises, in her prayers, spiritual readings, and Communions; she even finds in them nothing but darkness and fears, and all seems lost to her. She prays and prays again, and is overwhelmed with sadness, because God seems to have abandoned her.

O Jesus, my Hope, my Love and only Love of my soul, I deserve not Thy consolations and sweet visitations; keep them for those innocent souls who have always loved Thee; sinner that I am, I do not deserve them, nor do I ask for them : this only do I ask, give me grace to love Thee, to accomplish Thy adorable will during my whole life, and then dispose of me as Thou pleasest! Unhappy me! far other darkness, other terrors, other abandonments would be due to the outrages I have done Thee : hell were my just award, where, separated from Thee forever, and totally abandoned by Thee, I should shed tears eternally, without ever being able to love Thee more. But no, my Jesus, I accept of every punishment; only spare me this. Thou art deserving of an infinite love; Thou hast placed me under an excessive obligation of loving Thee; oh, no, I cannot trust myself to live and not love Thee!

Saturday—Eighth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL SINNERS.

St. Basil of Seleucia remarks that "if God granted to some who were only His servants such power that not only their touch, but even their very shadows, healed the sick who were placed for this purpose in the streets, how much greater power must we suppose He has granted to her who was not only His servant but His Mother!"

I.

St. Ephrem, addressing this Blessed Virgin, says: "Thou art the only advocate of sinners, and of all who are unprotected." And then he salutes her in the following words: "Hail, refuge and hospital of sinners!"—true refuge, in which alone they can hope for reception and liberty. And an author remarks that this was the meaning of David when he said: *For he hath hidden me in his tabernacle*—(Ps. xxvi. 5). And truly what can this tabernacle of God be unless it is Mary, who is called by St. Germanus "a tabernacle made by God, into which He alone entered to accomplish the great work of the Redemption of man.

St. Basil of Seleucia remarks that "if God granted to some who were only His servants such power that not only their touch but even their shadows healed the sick who were placed for this purpose in the public streets, how much greater power must we suppose that He has granted to her who was not only His handmaid but His Mother?" We may indeed say that our Lord has given us Mary as a public hospital, in which all who are sick, poor, and destitute can be received. But now

I ask, in hospitals erected expressly for the poor, who have the greatest claim to admission? Certainly the most infirm, and those who are in the greatest need.

And for this reason should any one find himself devoid of merit and overwhelmed with spiritual infirmities, that is to say, sin, he can thus address Mary: O Lady, thou art the refuge of the sick poor; reject me not, for as I am the poorest and the most infirm of all, I have the greatest right to be welcomed by thee.

II.

Let us, then, cry out with St. Thomas of Villanova: "O Mary, we poor sinners know no other refuge than thee, for thou art our only hope, and on thee we rely for our salvation." Thou art our only advocate with Jesus Christ; to thee do we all turn.

In the Revelations of St. Bridget, Mary is called the "Star preceding the sun," giving us thereby to understand, that when devotion towards the Divine Mother begins to manifest itself in a soul that is in a state of sin, it is a certain mark that before long God will enrich it with His grace. The glorious St. Bonaventure, in order to revive the confidence of sinners in the protection of Mary, places before them the picture of a tempestuous sea into which sinners have already fallen from the ship of Divine grace; they are already dashed about on every side by remorse of conscience and by fear of the judgments of God; they are without light or guide, and are on the point of losing the last breath of hope and falling into despair; then it is that our Lord, pointing out Mary to them, who is commonly called the "Star of the Sea," raises His voice and says: "O poor lost sinners, despair not! Raise up your eyes, and cast them on this beautiful star; breathe again with confidence, for it will save you from this tempest, and will guide you into the port of salvation." St. Bernard says the same thing: "If thou wouldst not be lost in the tempest, cast thine eyes on the star, and call upon Mary."

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER.

GOD GIVES TO ALL THE GRACE TO PRAY.

III—THEOLOGICAL REASONS THAT JUSTIFY THIS DOCTRINE.

Let us now proceed, in the third and last place, to examine the reasons of this opinion. Petavius, with Duval and other Theologians, asks: Why does God impose on us commands which we cannot keep with the *common* and *ordinary* grace? Because, he answers, He wishes us to have recourse to Him in Prayer. This is the general teaching of the Fathers, as we have seen above. Hence he infers that we ought to hold it as certain that every man has grace actually to pray, and by Prayer to obtain greater grace to enable him to do that which is impossible to him with the ordinary grace; otherwise God would have imposed an impossible law. This reason is very strong.

Another reason is that if God imposes on all men the duty of actual observance of His Commandments, we must necessarily suppose that He also gives to all men the grace necessary for this actual observance, at least mediately by means of Prayer. In order, therefore, to uphold the reasonableness of the Law, and the justice of the punishment of the disobedient, we must hold that every man has *sufficient* power, at least mediately by means of Prayer, for the actual performance of what is prescribed, and that he is able to pray without any unusual and additional grace; otherwise, if he had not this mediate or remote power of actually keeping the Commandments, it could never be said that all men had from God sufficient grace for the actual observance of the Law.

Tomassin and Tourneley bring forward many other reasons for this opinion; but I pass them over for one that seems to me demonstrative. It is founded on the

Precept of Hope, which obliges us all to hope in God with confidence for Eternal Life; and I say: If we were not certain that God gives us all grace to enable us actually to pray, without our being in need of another particular and unusual grace, no one without a special revelation could hope for salvation as he ought. But I must first explain the grounds of this argument.

The Virtue of Hope is so pleasing to God that He has declared that He feels delight in those who trust in Him: *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy*—(Ps. cxlvi. 11): And he promises victory over his enemies, perseverance in grace and eternal glory, to the man who hopes, and that because he hopes: *Because he hoped in me, I will deliver him; I will protect him . . . I will deliver him and I will glorify him*—(Ps. xc. 14). *Preserve me, for I have put my trust in thee*—(Ps. xv. 1). *He will save them, because they have hoped in him*—(Ps. xxxvi. 40). *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded*—(Ecclus. ii. 11). And let us be sure that the heavens and the earth will fail, but the promises of God cannot fail: *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*—(Matt. xxiv. 35). St. Bernard, therefore, says that all our merit consists in reposing all our confidence in God: "This is the whole merit of man, if he places all his hope in Him." The reason is that he who hopes in God honours Him much: *Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*—(Ps. xlix. 15). He honours the power, the mercy, and the faithfulness of God; since he believes that God can and will save him; and that He cannot fail in His promises to save the man who trusts in Him. And the Prophet assures us that the greater our confidence is, the greater will be the measure of God's mercy poured out upon us: *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in thee*—(Ps. xxxii. 22).

Now, as this Virtue of Hope is so pleasing to God, He has willed to impose it upon us by a Precept that binds under mortal sin, as all Theologians agree, and as is evident from many texts of Scripture. *Trust in him,*

all ye congregations of people—(Ps. lxi. 9). *Ye that fear the Lord, hope in him*—(Ecclus. ii. 9). *Hope in thy God always*—(Os. xii. 6). *Hope perfectly in that grace which is offered to you*—(1 Pet. i. 13). This Hope of Eternal Life ought, then, to be sure and firm in us, according to the definition of St. Thomas : "Hope is the certain expectation of Beatitude." And the sacred Council of Trent has expressly declared : "All men ought to place and repose a most firm Hope in the help of God; for God, unless they fail to correspond to His grace, as He has begun the good work, will also finish it, working in them both to will and to perform." And speaking of himself, St. Paul had already said : *I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him*—(2 Tim. i. 12). And herein is the difference between *Christian* hope and *worldly* hope. Worldly hope need only be an uncertain expectation; nor can it be otherwise; for it is always doubtful whether the man who has promised a favour may not hereafter change his mind, if he has not already changed it. But the Christian Hope of Eternal Salvation is certain on God's part; for He can and will save us, and has promised to save those who obey His Law, and to this end has promised us all necessary graces to enable us to observe this Law, if we ask for them. It is true that Hope is accompanied by fear, as St. Thomas says; but this fear does not arise from God's side, but from our own, since we may at any time fall by not corresponding as we ought and by putting an impediment in the way of grace by our sins. For this reason then, did the Council of Trent condemn those innovators, who, because they entirely deprive man of free will, say that every believer must have an infallible certitude of perseverance and salvation. This error was condemned by the Council; because, as we have said, in order to obtain salvation our correspondence is necessary, and this correspondence of ours is uncertain and fallible. Hence God wills that we should, on the one hand, always fear for ourselves, lest, trusting in our own strength, we should fall into presumption, but, on the other, that we

should be always certain of His good will, and of His assistance to save us, provided always that we ask Him for it, so that we may always have a sure confidence in His goodness. St. Thomas says that we ought to look with certainty to receive from God Eternal happiness, confiding in His power and mercy, and believing that He can and will save us. "Whoever has Faith, is certain of God's power and mercy."

Now, as the Hope of our salvation which we place in God ought to be certain (according to the definition of St. Thomas—"*the certain expectation of beatitude*") it follows that the motive of our Hope must also be certain; for if the foundation of our Hope were uncertain, and open to a doubt, we could not with any certainty hope and expect to receive salvation, and the means necessary for it from the hands of God. St. Paul insists on our being firm and immovable in our Hope, if we would be saved: *If so ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and immovable from the hope of the Gospel, which you have heard*—(Col. i. 23). This he confirms in another place where he says that our Faith ought to be as immovable as an anchor securely fixed, since it is grounded on the promises of God Who cannot deceive: *And we desire that every one of you show forth the same carefulness to the accomplishing of hope unto the end . . . That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm*—(Heb. vi. 11-19). Hence St. Bernard says that our Hope cannot be uncertain, as it rests on God's promises: "Nor does this expectation seem to us vain, or this Hope doubtful, since we rely on the promises of the Eternal Truth." In another place St. Bernard says of himself that his hope depends on three things—the love which induced God to adopt us as His children, the truth of His promises, and His power to fulfil them: "Three things I see in which my Hope consists—the love of adoption, the truth of the promise, the power to fulfil."

And therefore the Apostle, St. James, declares that the man who desires the grace of God must ask for it, not with hesitation, but with the confident certainty of obtaining it : *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering* —(James i. 6). For if he asks with hesitation he shall obtain nothing : *For he that wavereth is like the wave of the sea, that is moved and carried about by the wind; therefore, let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord*—(James i. 6, 7). And St. Paul praises Abraham because he in nothing doubted God's promise, knowing that when God promises, He cannot fail to perform : *In the promise also of God he staggered not by distrust; but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God; most fully knowing that whatsoever he has promised, he is able also to perform*—(Rom. iv. 20-21). Hence, also, Jesus Christ tells us that we shall then receive all the graces that we desire when we ask them with a sure belief of receiving them : *Therefore I say to you, all things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive them, and they shall come unto you*—(Mark xi. 24). In a word, God will not hear us, unless we have a sure confidence of being heard.

Now, my argument is this. Our Hope of salvation, and of receiving the means necessary for its attainment, must be certain on God's part. The foundations of this certainty are, as we have seen, the Power, the Mercy, and the Fidelity of God; and of these the strongest and most certain is God's infallible Fidelity to the promise which He has made on account of the merits of Jesus Christ, to save us, and to give us the graces necessary for our salvation; for, as Giovenino well observes, though we might believe God to be infinite in Power and Mercy, nevertheless we could not feel confident expectation of God saving us, unless He had surely promised to do so. But this promise is on condition that we correspond with God's grace and pray, as is clear from the Scriptures : *Ask, and ye shall receive. If ye ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you. He will give good things to those that ask him. We ought always to pray. Ye have not, because ye ask not. If any one wanteth wis-*

dom let him ask of God; and from many other texts which we have already quoted. Wherefore it is that the Fathers and Theologians maintain, as we have shown, that Prayer is a necessary means of Salvation.

Now, if we were not certain that God gives to all men grace to enable them actually to pray, without need of a further special grace and one not common to all, we could have no certain and firm foundation for a certain Hope of salvation in God, but only an uncertain and conditional foundation. When I have the assurance that by Prayer I shall obtain Eternal Life, and all the graces necessary to attain it; and when I know that God will give to me what he gives to all men, namely, the grace of actual Prayer, if I so will, then I have a sure foundation for hoping in God for salvation, if I fail not on my part. But when I am in doubt whether or not God will give me that particular grace which He does not give to all, but which is necessary for actual Prayer, then I have not a certain foundation for my Hope of salvation, but only a doubtful and uncertain one, since I cannot be sure that God will give me this special grace, without which I cannot pray, as He refuses it to so many. And in this case the uncertainty would be not only on my part, but also on God's part; and so Christian Hope would be destroyed, which, according to the Apostle, ought to be immovable, firm, and secure. I say in all truth, I cannot see how a Christian can fulfil the precept of Hope—hoping, as he ought, with sure confidence for salvation from God, and for the graces necessary for its attainment—unless he holds it as an infallible truth that God commonly gives to every individual the grace actually to pray, if he chooses, without any further special assistance.

So that to conclude, our System or opinion (held by so many Theologians, and by our humble Congregation) well agrees—

(*a*) On the one hand, with the doctrine of *grace intrinsically efficacious,* by means of which we infallibly, though freely, act virtuously.

It cannot be denied that God can easily, with His

Omnipotence, incline and move men's hearts freely to will that which He wills, as the Scriptures teach : *The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord : whithersoever he will, he shall turn it*—(Prov. xxi. 1); *I will put my spirit in the midst of you, and I will cause you to walk in my commandments*—(Ezech. xxxvi. 27); *My counsel shall stand, and all my will shall be done*—(Is. xlvi. 10); *He changeth the heart of the princes of the people of the earth*—(Job xii. 24); *May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work, that you may do his will; working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ*—(Heb. xiii. 21).

And it cannot be denied that St. Augustine and St. Thomas have taught the opinion of the efficaciousness of grace in itself, by its own nature. This is evident from many passages, and specially from the following :—

St. Augustine says : " Yet God did not this, except by the will of the men themselves; since He, no doubt, has the most almighty and absolute power of inclining the hearts of men." Again : " Almighty God works in the hearts of men that He may do by their means that which He has willed to do through them." Again : " Although they all do what is right in the service of God, yet He causes them to do what He commands." Again : " It is certain that it is we who act when we act; but He causes us to act, by bestowing most efficacious powers on the will, according to His words, *I will cause you to walk in my commandments*—(Ezech. xxxvi. 27). Again, on the text, *For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish according to his good will*—(Phil. ii. 13), St. Augustine says : " We therefore will; but God worketh in us even to will."

Again : " God knows how to work in men's hearts, not so as to make them believe against their will, which is impossible, but so as to make them willing instead of unwilling." Again : " He works in the hearts of men not only true revelations, but also good-will." Again : " The acts of our will have just so much power as God wishes them to have." So also St. Thomas : " God infallibly moves the will by the efficacy of the moving

power, which cannot fail." Again: "Love has the character of impeccability, from the power of the Holy Spirit, Who infallibly works whatever He will; hence it is impossible that these two things should be at the same time true—that the Holy Spirit wills to move a person to an act of love, and that at the same time the person should lose love by an act of sin." Again: "If God moves the will to do anything, it is impossible to say that the will is not moved to it."

(*b*) On the other hand, our teaching is quite consonant to the doctrine of *truly sufficient grace being given to all,* by corresponding to which a man will gain efficacious grace; while by not corresponding, but resisting, he will deservedly be denied this efficacious grace. And thus all excuse is taken away from those sinners who say that they have not strength to overcome their temptations; because if they had prayed, and made use of the ordinary grace which is given to all men, they would have obtained strength, and would have been saved. If, on the contrary, a person does not admit this ordinary grace by which everyone is enabled at least to pray, without needing a further special unusual grace, and by Prayer to obtain further assistance to enable him to fulfil the Law, I do not know how he can explain all those texts of Scripture, in which souls are exhorted to return to God, to overcome temptation, and to correspond to the Divine invitation: *Return, ye transgressors, to the heart* —(Is. xlvi. 8); *Return and live*: *Be converted and do penance*—(Ezech. xviii. 30, 32); *Loose the bonds from off thy neck*—(Is. lii. 2); *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened*—(Matt. xi. 28); *Resist, strong in faith* —(1 Pet. v. 9); *Walk whilst you have the light*—(Jo. xii. 35). I cannot tell, I say, supposing it were true that the grace of Prayer were not given to all to enable them thereby to obtain the further assistance necessary for salvation, how these texts could be explained. And I do not know how the Sacred Writers could so forcibly exhort all men, without any exception, to be converted, to resist the enemy, to walk in the way of virtue, and, for this end, to pray with confidence and perseverance,

if the grace of doing well, or at least of praying, were not granted to all, but only to those who have the gift of efficacious grace. And I cannot see where would be the justice of the reproof given to all sinners, without exception, who resist grace and despise the Voice of God: *You always resist the Holy Ghost*—(Acts vii. 51). *Because I called and you refused; I stretched out my hand and there was none that regarded; you have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions*—(Prov. i. 24-25). If sinners were without even the remote grace of Prayer, and that, too, an efficacious grace, which our opponents consider necessary for actual Prayer, I cannot see how all these reproofs could be justly made against them.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

Let us come now to the practice of what we are to do on our part in the like circumstances. When Almighty God in His mercy deigns to console us with His loving visitations, and to let us feel the presence of His grace, it is not good to reject the Divine consolations, as some false mystics advise: let us thankfully receive them, but let us beware of settling down on them, and seeking delight in those feelings of spiritual tenderness. St. John of the Cross calls this a "spiritual gluttony," which is faulty and displeasing to God. Let us strive in such moments to banish from our mind the

sensible enjoyment of these sweetnesses: and let us be especially on our guard against supposing that these favours are a token of our standing better with God than others; for such a thought of vanity would oblige God to withdraw Himself from us altogether, and to leave us in our miseries. We must certainly at such times return most fervant thanks to God, because such spiritual consolations are signal gifts of the Divine bounty to our souls, far greater than all the riches and honours of this world. But let us not seek then to regale ourselves on these sensible sweetnesses, but let us rather humble ourselves by the remembrance of the sins of our past life. For the rest, we must consider this loving treatment as the pure result of the goodness of God; and that perhaps, it is sent in order that we may be strengthened by these consolations to endure with patience and resignation some great tribulation soon to befall us. We should, therefore, take the occasion of offering ourselves to suffer every pain, internal or external, that may happen to us—every illness, every persecution, every spiritual desolation—saying: O my Lord, I am here before Thee; do with me, and with all that belongs to me, whatever Thou wilt; grant me the grace to love Thee and perfectly to accomplish Thy holy will, and I ask no more!

II.

When a soul is morally certain of being in the grace of God, although she may be deprived of worldly pleasures, as well as of those which come from God, she nevertheless rests satisfied with her state, conscious, as she is, of loving God and of being loved by Him. But God wishes to see her purified and divested of all sensible satisfaction, in order to unite her entirely to Himself by means of pure love and so He puts her in the crucible of desolation, which is more painful to bear than the most severe trials, whether internal or external; she is left in uncertainty as to whether she is in the grace of God or not, and in the dense darkness that shrouds her, there seems no prospect of her evermore finding God. Almighty God, moreover, will sometimes permit

the soul to be assailed by violent sensual temptations, accompanied by irregular movements of the lower nature, or perhaps by thoughts of unbelief, of despair, and even of hatred of God, when she imagines herself cast off by Him, and that He no longer hears her prayers. And as, on the one hand, the suggestions of the devil are vehement, and the motions of concupiscence are excited, and, on the other, the soul finds herself in this great darkness, she can no longer sufficiently distinguish whether she properly resists or yields to the temptations, though her will resolutely refuses all consent. Her fears of having lost God are thus very much increased; and from her fancied infidelity in struggling against the temptations, she thinks herself deservedly abandoned by God. The saddest of all calamities seems to have befallen her—to be able no longer to love God, and to be hated by Him. St. Teresa passed through all these trials, and declares that during them solitude had no charms for her, but on the contrary filled her with horror; while prayer was changed for her into a perfect hell.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

(*For the 25th July*).

THE DESIRE JESUS HAD TO SUFFER FOR US.

What a subject of wonder to the Angels must not the great love of God have been when they saw the Eternal Word become Man for the Redemption of

fallen man! How is it possible, indeed, that God should be so enamoured of men and that men, who are so grateful to one another, should be so ungrateful to God?

I.

Jesus could have saved us without suffering; but He chose rather to embrace a life of sorrow and contempt, deprived of every earthly consolation, and a death of bitterness and desolation, only to make us understand the love He bore us, and the desire He had that we should love Him. He passed His whole life in sighing for the hour of His death, which He desired to offer to God to obtain for us eternal salvation. And it was this desire which made Him exclaim: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished*?—(Luke xii. 50). He desired to be baptized in His own Blood, to wash out, not indeed His own sins, but ours. O infinite Love, how miserable is he who does not know Thee, and does not love Thee!

This same desire caused Jesus to say, on the night before His death: *With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you.* By which words He shows that His one desire during His whole life had been to see the time arrive for His Passion and Death, in order to prove to man the immense love He bore him. So much, therefore, O my Jesus, didst Thou desire our love, that to obtain it Thou didst not refuse to die. How can I, then, deny anything to a God Who has given His Blood and His life for the love of me?

II.

St. Bonaventure says that it is a marvel to see a God suffering for the love of men; but that it is a still greater marvel that men should behold a God suffering so much for them, shivering with cold as an Infant in a manger, living as a poor boy in a shop, dying as a criminal on a Cross, and yet not burn with love for this most loving God; and even go so far as to despise this love for the sake of the miserable pleasures of this earth. But how

is it possible that God should be so enamoured of men, and that men who are so grateful to one another, should be so ungrateful to God?

Alas, my Jesus, I find myself also among the number of these ungrateful ones. Tell me, how couldst Thou suffer so much for me, knowing the injuries I would commit against Thee? But since Thou hast borne with me, and even desirest my salvation, give me, I pray Thee, a great sorrow for my sins, a sorrow equal to my ingratitude. I hate and detest, above all things, the displeasure I have caused Thee. If, during my past life, I despised Thy grace, now I value it above all the kingdoms of the earth. I love Thee with my whole soul, O God, worthy of infinite love, and I desire only to live in order to love Thee. Increase the flames of Thy love, and give me more and more love. Keep alive in my remembrance the love Thou hast borne me, so that my heart may always burn with love for Thee, as Thy Heart burns with love for me. O burning heart of Mary, inflame my poor heart with holy love.

Spiritual Reading

PRAYER—CONCLUSION.

I have done. Some, perhaps will wish that I had given more space to the distinct examination of the question so much controverted, *wherein consists the efficacy of grace*, and which the Systems of different Schools attribute to—physical premotion,—to congruous grace,—to concomitant grace,—to a delectation which overcomes by reason of moral motion—to a delectation which overcomes by reason of its superiority in degree. But for this, such a book as mine, which I deliberately intended should be small and more likely to be read, would not have been enough. To explore this vast sea many volumes would be required.

But this work has been sufficiently performed by others, and, moreover, it was beside my purpose. Still, however, I wished to establish the Proposition—*that God gives to all the grace of Prayer,* for the honour of God's Providence and Goodness, and to be of assistance to sinners, to prevent them from giving themselves up to despair, thinking themselves deprived of grace; and, at the same time, to take from them all excuse for saying that they have not strength to resist the assaults of the senses and of hell. I have shown them that of those who are lost, no one is damned for the Original sin of Adam, but solely for his own sin, because God refuses to no one the grace of Prayer, whereby we may obtain His assistance to overcome every desire and every temptation.

After all, of course, my principal intention was to recommend to all men the use of Prayer, that most powerful and necessary means of grace, in order that all men may more diligently and earnestly attend to it, if they wish to be saved. Many poor souls lose God's grace, and continue to live in sin, and are finally damned, for this very reason, that they did not pray, nor have recourse to God for assistance. The worst of the matter is (I cannot help repeating it), that so few preachers and so few confessors recommend Prayer to their hearers and penitents, without which it is impossible to observe the laws of God, and to obtain perseverance in His grace.

Having observed that so many passages, both of the Old and the New Testament, assert the absolute necessity of Prayer, I have taken care to see that on the Missions given by our Congregation, there should always be a Sermon on Prayer, which is now our custom of long years standing. And this I say, and repeat, and will keep repeating as long as I live, that our salvation wholly depends on Prayer; and, therefore, that all writers in their books, all preachers in their sermons, all confessors in their instructions to their penitents, should inculcate nothing more strongly than continual Prayer. They should admonish them, and unceasingly exhort them : *Pray ! Pray ! Never cease to pray ! For*

if you pray, your salvation will be certain; but if you leave off praying, certain will be your damnation. All preachers and directors ought to preach this; because, according to the teaching of every Catholic School, there is no doubt of this truth, that he who prays obtains grace and is saved. Those who practise it are too few; and this is the reason why so few are saved.

I.

PRAYER TO JESUS CHRIST, TO OBTAIN HIS HOLY LOVE.

My crucified Love, my dear Jesus! I believe in Thee, and confess Thee to be the true Son of God and my Saviour. I adore Thee from the abyss of my own nothingness, and I thank Thee for the death Thou didst suffer for me, that I might obtain the life of Divine grace. My beloved Redeemer, to Thee I owe all my salvation. Through Thee I have hitherto escaped hell. Through Thee have I received the pardon of my sins, But I am so ungrateful that, instead of loving Thee, I have repeated my offences against Thee. I deserve to be condemned, so as not to be able to love Thee any more. But no, my Jesus, punish me in any other way, but not in this. If I have not loved Thee in time past, I love Thee now; and I desire nothing but to love Thee with all my heart. But without Thy help I can do nothing. Since Thou dost command me to love Thee, give me also the strength to fulfil this Thy sweet and loving precept. Thou hast promised to grant all that we ask of Thee: *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you*—(Jo. xv. 7). Confiding, then, in this promise, my dear Jesus, I ask, first of all, pardon of all my sins; and I repent of them above all things, because I have offended Thee, O Infinite Goodness! I ask for holy perseverance in Thy grace until death. But above all, I ask for the gift of Thy holy love. Ah, my Jesus, my Hope, my Love, my All, inflame me with that love which Thou didst come on earth to enkindle! For this end make me always live in conformity with Thy holy will. Enlighten me that I may understand more and

more how worthy Thou art to be loved, and that I may know the immense love Thou hast borne me, especially in giving Thy life for me. Grant, then, that I may love Thee with all my heart, and may love Thee always, and never cease to beg of Thee the grace to love Thee in this life; that always living in Thy love, and dying in Thy love, I may come one day to love Thee with all my strength in heaven, never to cease loving Thee for all eternity.

O Mother of beautiful love, O Mary, my advocate and refuge, who art of all creatures the most beautiful, the most loving, and the most beloved of God, and whose only desire it is to see Him loved! ah, by the love that thou bearest to Jesus Christ, pray for me, and obtain for me the grace to love Him always and with all my heart! This I ask and hope for from Thee. Amen.

II.

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE GRACE OF BEING CONSTANT IN PRAYER.

O God of my soul, I hope in Thy goodness that Thou hast pardoned all my offences against Thee, and that I am now in the state of grace. I thank Thee for it with all my heart, and I hope to thank Thee for all eternity. *The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever*—(Ps. lxxxviii. 2). I know well why I have fallen, because I have not had recourse to Thee when I was tempted, to ask for holy perseverance. For the future, I firmly resolve to recommend myself always to Thee and especially when I see myself in danger of offending Thee again. I will always fly to Thy mercy, invoking always the most holy Names of Jesus and Mary, with full confidence that when I pray Thou wilt not fail to give me the strength I need to resist my enemies. This I resolve and promise to do. But of what use, O my God, will all these resolutions and promises be, if Thou dost not assist me with Thy grace to put them in practice; that is, to have recourse to Thee in all dangers? O Eternal Father, help me, for the love of Jesus Christ,

and let me never omit recommending myself to Thee whenever I am tempted. I know that Thou dost always help me when I have recourse to Thee; but my fear is that I should forget to recommend myself to Thee, and my negligence be the cause of my ruin, that is, the loss of Thy grace, the greatest evil that can befall me. Ah, by the merits of Jesus Christ, give me the grace to pray to Thee; but grant me such an abundant grace that I may always pray, and pray as I ought!

O my Mother Mary, whenever I have had recourse to thee, thou hast obtained for me the help which has kept me from falling! Now I come to beg of thee to obtain a still greater grace, namely, that of recommending myself always to thy Son and to thee in all my necessities. My Queen, thou obtainest all thou dost desire from God by the love thou bearest to Jesus Christ; obtain for me now this grace which I beg of thee—namely, to pray always, and never to cease to pray, even unto death. Amen.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

When a soul that loves God finds herself in this state of darkness, uncertainty, and fear, she must not lose courage; and neither must he who directs her become alarmed. Those sensual movements, those temptations against Faith, those feelings of distrust, and those attacks which urge her to hate Almighty God, are fears, are tortures of the soul, are efforts of the enemy; but they are not voluntary, and therefore they are not sins.

The sincere lover of Jesus Christ resists valiantly on such occasions, and withholds all consent to such suggestions; but because of the darkness which envelops her she knows not how to distinguish, her soul is thrown into confusion, and the privation of the presence of Divine grace makes her fearful and sad. But it can be soon discovered that in these souls, thus tried by God, all is dread and apprehension, but not truth : only ask them, even in their state of desolation, whether they would willingly commit one single deliberate venial sin; they will reply that they are ready to suffer not one, but a thousand deaths, rather than be guilty of giving such displeasure to Almighty God.

II.

It is necessary, therefore, to make this distinction, that it is one thing to perform an act of virtue, such as to repel a temptation, to trust in God, to love God, and to will what He wills; and it is another thing to have the consciousness of really making these good acts. This consciousness of doing good contributes to our pleasure; but the profit consists, not in our being conscious of doing good, but in actually doing good. God is satisfied with our doing good, but deprives the soul of the consciousness of doing it in order thus to remove from her all self-satisfaction, which, of course, adds nothing to the merit of the good action; for our Lord ever desires our real advantage more than our satisfaction. St. John of the Cross wrote the following words to comfort a desolate soul : " You were never in a better state than at present; for you were never so deeply humbled, and so cut off from all attachment to this world, and at the same time you were never so thoroughly impressed with the conviction of your own wickedness. Neither were you ever so divested and purified of all self-seeking as now." Let us, then, not believe that when we feel a greater tenderness of devotion we are more beloved by God; for perfection does not consist in that, but in the mortification of our own will, and in its union with the will of God.

Monday—Ninth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"PATIENCE HATH A PERFECT WORK."

Patience hath a perfect work. Patience is a perfect sacrifice which we offer to God; because in suffering tribulations and contradictions we are but accepting from God's hands the cross He sends us. All our good, indeed, consists in bearing crosses with patience.

I.

Patience hath a perfect work—(James i. 4). Patience is a perfect sacrifice that we offer to God; because in suffering tribulations and contradictions we are but accepting from God's hands the cross He sends us. *A patient man is better than the valiant*—(Prov. xvi. 32). He who suffers with patience is better than a valiant man. Some are resolute and courageous in promoting and supporting a pious undertaking, but are not patient in bearing adversity. It would be better for them to be valiant in patience than in undertaking good works. This earth is a place of merit, and therefore it is not a place of repose, but of toils and pains; for merit is acquired not by rest but by suffering. All those who live here below, whether saints or sinners, must suffer. Some are in want of this, others of that; some have nobility, but are poor; others abound in riches, but want nobility; others enjoy nobility and wealth but are poor in health. In a word, all, even sovereigns, have occasion to suffer; because sovereigns are the most exalted of mortals their cares and troubles are the most harassing and perplexing.

All our good, then, consists in bearing crosses with patience. Hence the Holy Ghost admonishes us not to become like to senseless beasts that break out into a rage when they are unable to indulge their appetites. *Do not become like the horse and the mule who have not understanding*—(Ps. xxxi. 9). What other advantage than to double our misfortunes can we ever derive from giving way to impatience in contradictions? The good thief and the bad thief died on the cross, both suffering the same pains; but because one embraced them with patience he was saved, and the other bore them with impatience he was damned. St. Augustine says that the same affliction sends the just to glory because they accept it with peace, and the wicked to fire because they submit to it with impatience.

II.

It often happens that a person who flies from a cross that God sends him meets with another far more afflicting. *They,* says Job, *that fear the hoar frost, the snow shall fall upon them*—(Job vi. 16). They who shun the hoar-frost shall be covered with snow. Such a one may say: Give me any other office, but take from me the one that I hold. But he will suffer much more in the second office than in the first, and with little or no merit. Be careful not to imitate such. Embrace the fatigue and tribulation that God sends you: for you will thus acquire greater merit, and in truth have less to suffer: you will at least suffer with peace, knowing that your sufferings come not from self-will, but from the will of God. Let us be persuaded of the truth of what St. Augustine says, that the whole life of a Christian must be a continual cross. The life of those who wish to become saints must in a special manner be a continued series of crosses. St. Gregory Nazianzen says that these noble souls place their riches in poverty, their glory in contempt, and their delights in the voluntary privation of earthly pleasures. Hence St. John Climacus asks: Who is truly religious? He answers: He that offers continual violence to himself.

And when shall this violence cease? When life shall have an end, answers St. Prosper. Then shall the battle cease when the conquest of the eternal kingdom shall be obtained. If you remember to have hitherto offended God, and if you desire to be saved, you should be consoled when you see that God sends you an occasion of suffering. St. John Chrysostom writes: "Sin is an ulcer, and chastisement a healing iron: therefore the sinner who is left unpunished is most miserable." Sin is an abscess on the soul: if tribulation do not come to extract the putrid humour the soul is lost. Miserable the sinner who is not punished after his sin in this life.

Spiritual Reading

*THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.**

Amongst those who have been eminent in the Church of God, both for their lives and their labours, a foremost place must be assigned to St. Alphonsus Mary Liguori. This illustrious man, who may truly be styled an apostle, spent a long life of upwards of ninety years in the zealous service of God, and in unwearied labours for the good of souls—a proof sufficient of the greatness and varied nature of his sanctity. The long life of this holy man presents us, indeed, with examples of every virtue; yet there is one virtue which shines forth conspicuously from among the rest, and gives a definite tone and character to his whole life—I mean his burning love for Jesus Christ. With Alphonsus, as with St. Paul, *to live was Christ*. This love was the sacred source from which were derived all the other virtues which he practised in an heroic degree. It was from his love for Jesus that there

* This sketch of the Life of St. Alphonsus, the Doctor and Apostle of Prayer, was taken from Surius' Lives of the Saints (Marietti, Turin), and edited by Very Rev. Aston Coffin, C.SS.R., in 1880. We thank the Publishers, Messrs. Gill and Sons, Dublin, for allowing us to insert it in this volume.—ED.

sprung that ardent zeal for souls which ever inflamed his heart, and which found vent in apostolic labours without number. This love it was which urged him on to write so many books replete with learning and piety, by which he won for himself the glorious title of Doctor of the Church. Hence the lesson which the life of Alphonsus ought to teach us is that in order to sanctify ourselves and our neighbours there is but one thing necessary, and that is a great and genuine love for Jesus Christ; especially if this love is accompanied, as it was in the heart of Alphonsus, by an affectionate and filial confidence in the Virgin Mother of God.

St. Alphonsus Mary Liguori was born on the 26th of September in the year 1696, in a country place called Marianella, near Naples, where his father possessed a villa. His infancy was marked by those signs of future sanctity which generally adorn the cradle of the Saints. When his mother presented him, shortly after his birth, to Father Francis of Jerome, S.J. (as we read in the Roman Breviary), and begged the holy man's blessing for her infant, Father Francis (who was afterwards canonised on the same day as Alphonsus) prophesied of him that he would live to the age of ninety, would become a bishop, and would do great things for the Church. Our history will show how happily this prophecy was fulfilled.

The parents of Alphonsus were both of them members of noble families of great antiquity. They were also distinguished by a piety of no common order. His father, Don Joseph Liguori, belonged to the family of the Prince of Presiccio, and was brother of Monsignor Liguori, Bishop of Cava. His duties as a naval officer did not prevent him from diligently practising all the duties of a good Christian. He was particularly devout to Our Lord's Passion, frequently approached the Sacraments, and his delicacy of conscience was so well known that no one dared to utter an unseemly word in his presence. Yet he was too fond of worldly honours and his ambition urged him on to oppose his son's Divine call to a higher life, as we shall afterwards see.

The mother of Alphonsus, Anne Catherine Cavallieri, was a person of extraordinary merit and piety. She was not the only member of her family remarkable for holiness of life, for her brother was that great servant of God, Monsignor Cavallieri, the saintly Bishop of Troja. The great aim of her life was to bring up in a truly Christian manner the seven children with whom God had blessed her. In order to attain her end, her first care was to instil into their hearts a truly ardent love for Jesus Christ, together with a tender and filial devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God. Her maternal anxiety was crowned with the happiest success; for of the three brothers of Alphonsus, one became a Benedictine; another chose the sacerdotal state, and lived a most holy life in his father's house; and the third, who married, led a life worthy of a good Christian. Of his sisters, two became nuns, and dedicated their virginity to Christ; the third, who was married, was a model of Christian mothers. But Alphonsus himself became the pride and glory, not only of his own family but of the whole Church. Even in his old age he used to thank God for having given him so holy a mother. "This," he used to say, "was one of the greatest graces which God bestowed upon me, for if I avoided evil when I was a boy, I owe it to my mother."

Under the care of such parents, Alphonsus in his earliest years, laid the solid foundation of his wonderful sanctity. He was accustomed to pay frequent loving visits to Jesus hidden in the Sacred Tabernacle, and was assiduous in the devout invocation of the Blessed Virgin, especially by reciting her Rosary—a custom in which he persevered until his death. As for sin, the pleasures of the world, and the company of the licentious, all these he fled from as from a serpent. In order to tread more securely in the path of virtue, by the advice of his mother, he joined the Congregation of Young Nobles, and so perfectly observed the rules of this confraternity that, as the Roman Breviary testifies, all the young noblemen were drawn to Christian modesty by his words and example. His pious manner of life obtained for him the gift of a

high contemplation, even when he had scarcely reached his twelfth year, as is proved by the following remarkable occurrence. On a certain occasion he had been taken, with some of his companions, to a country house for recreation. The boys began to play at some game, in which they wished Alphonsus to join. At first he refused, but finally, yielding to their importunities, he took part in the game. Fortune favoured him to such an extent that one of his companions, envious of his success, completely lost his temper and broke out into blasphemies against God. As soon as the pious youth heard these imprecations, indignant that God should be thus outraged for such a trifle, he at once quitted the company, and retired into a neighbouring wood to pray. Here, after a long search, he was found in the evening, kneeling before a picture of the Blessed Virgin, and rapt in a sweet ecstasy.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

Wherefore, in this state of desolation the soul must not heed the devil, when he suggests that God has abandoned her; nor must she leave off prayer. This is the object at which the devil is aiming, in order afterwards to drag her down some precipice. St. Teresa writes: "The Lord proves His true lovers by dryness and temptations. What though the dryness should be

of life-long duration, let the soul never relax in prayer; the time will arrive when all will be abundantly repaid." In such a state of suffering a person should humble himself by the reflection that his offences against God are undeserving of any milder treatment; he should humble himself, and be fully resigned to the Divine will, saying: O my Lord, behold me at Thy feet; if it be Thy will that I should remain thus desolate and afflicted for my whole life, and even for all eternity, only grant me Thy grace and the gift of Thy love, and do with me whatever Thou wilt.

II.

It will be useless then, and perhaps a source of greater disquiet, to wish to assure yourself that you are in the grace of God, and that what you experience is only a trial, and not abandonment on the part of God. At such times it is not the will of God that you should have this assurance; and He so wills it for your greater advantage, in order that you may humble yourself the more, and increase your prayers and acts of confidence in His mercy. You desire to see, and God wills that you should not see. For the rest, St. Francis de Sales says: "The resolution not to consent to any sin, however small, is a sure sign that we are in God's grace." But a soul in profound desolation cannot even clearly discern this resolution; nevertheless, in such a state she must not aim at *feeling* what she *wills;* it is enough to will with the point of the will. In this manner she must entirely abandon herself into the arms of the Divine Goodness. Oh, how such acts of confidence and resignation ravish the Heart of God, when made in the midst of the darkness of desolation! Ah, let us simply trust in a God, Who, as St. Teresa says, loves us far better than we love ourselves.

Tuesday—Ninth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"PATIENCE HATH A PERFECT WORK."

"Let man understand," says St. Augustine, "that God is a physician, and that tribulation is a medicine for salvation, not a punishment for damnation." Hence we ought to thank God when He chastises us, for His chastisements are a proof of His love for us, and that He wishes to number us amongst His children.

1.

Be persuaded, says St. Augustine, that when the Lord sends you suffering He acts as a physician; and that the tribulation He sends you is not the punishment of condemnation, but a remedy for your salvation. "Let man understand," says the holy Doctor, "that God is a physician, and that tribulation is a medicine for salvation, not a punishment for damnation." Hence you ought to thank God when He chastises you; for His chastisements are a proof that He loves you, and receives you into the number of His children. *Whoever the Lord loveth,* says St. Paul, *he chastiseth; and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*—(Heb. xii. 6). Hence, St. Augustine says: "Do you enjoy consolation? Acknowledge a father who caresses you: Are you in tribulation? Recognise a parent who corrects you." On the other hand, the same holy Doctor says: "Unhappy you, if after you have sinned God exempts you from scourges in this life. It is a sign that He excludes you from the number of His children." Say not, then, for the future, when you find yourself in tribulation, that God has forgotten you; say rather

that you have forgotten your sins. He who knows that He has offended God must pray with St. Bonaventure : " Hasten, O Lord, hasten, and wound Thy servants with sacred wounds, lest they be wounded with the wounds of death." Hasten, O Lord, wound Thy servants with the wounds of love and salvation, that they may escape the wounds of Thy wrath and of eternal death.

II.

Let us rest assured that God sends us crosses not for our destruction but for our salvation. If we know not how to turn them to our own profit it is entirely our own fault. Explaining the words : *the house of Israel is become dross to me, all these are . . . iron and lead in the midst of the furnace*—(Ezech. xxii. 18), St. Gregory says : " As if God should say : ' I wished to purify them by the fire of tribulation, and sought to make them gold, but in the furnace they have become unto me iron and lead.' " I have endeavoured by the fire of tribulation to change them into pure gold, but they have been converted into lead. These are the sinners who, though they have several times deserved hell, when visited with any calamity, break out into impatience and anger; they almost wish to look upon God as if guilty of injustice and tyranny, and even go so far as to say : But, O Lord, I am not the only one who has offended Thee. It would appear I am the only person whom Thou chastisest. I am weak; I have not strength to bear so great a cross. Miserable man, alas ! What do you say ? You say to God : I am not the only one who has offended Thee. If others have offended God, He will punish them also in this life if He wills to show mercy to them; but do you not know that, according to the word of God—*My indignation shall rest in thee, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and . . . I will be angry no more*—(Ezech. xvi. 42) the greatest chastisement God can inflict on sinners is not to chastise them on this earth ? I have no more zeal for your soul, and therefore as long as you live you shall never more feel my anger. But St. Bernard says :

" God's anger is greatest when He is not angry. I wish, O Father of Mercies, that Thou mayest be angry with me." God's wrath against sinners is greatest when He is not angry with them, and abstains from chastising them. Hence the Saint prayed the Lord, saying : Lord, I wish that Thou shouldst treat me with the mercy of the Father of Mercies, and therefore I wish that Thou shouldst chastise me here for my sins, and thus save me from Thy everlasting vengeance. Do you say, I have not strength to bear this cross? But if you have not strength why do you not ask it of God? He has promised to give His aid to all who pray for it : *Ask, and it shall be given you*—(Matt. vii. 7).

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

Meantime his studies were not neglected. His father, remarking the wonderful quickness of his intellect, procured the best masters for him as soon as he was capable of instruction. The young Alphonsus soon obtained considerable proficiency in the Greek, Latin, and French languages. He excelled, too, in poetical composition, as may be inferred from the touching hymns which he composed, especially those in honour of Jesus and Mary. He applied himself, too, to the study of music, painting, and architecture with no inconsiderable success. After these lighter accomplishments he turned his attention to graver subjects, such as philosophy and mathematics, and finally gave himself up entirely to the study of law. The Bull of his Canonization tells us that " he possessed so great an aptitude for learning that he had scarcely entered on his sixteenth year when, after a rigorous examination, he obtained, with distinguished applause, the degree of Doctor both in Canon and Civil Law." All

Naples, indeed, wondered at the extent and solidity of his knowledge. From this time, in obedience to the wishes of his father, he applied all his attention to the practice of the Bar. For ten years he continued to plead as a barrister, with brilliant success for during all this time he never lost a single case, with the exception of the last of all, of which we are about to speak, and the loss of which produced such happy results. The arduous duties which engaged him in the law-courts did not, however, induce him to swerve even a hair's breadth from the path of virtue. No one could be more vigilant than he was in avoiding occasions of sin. If he happened to commit a fault, he bitterly wept over it, however slight it might be. When he joined the pious Congregation of young doctors he was a model for all his companions. He used to be present each day at the Holy Sacrifice; frequently to go to Confession and to Holy Communion; to spend a great part of his time in prayer, especially during the devotion of the Forty Hours; and to serve the sick in the public hospitals. These pious practices formed the delight of our young lawyer. In order, too, to keep up the fervour of his piety, he accompanied his father every year to some religious house in order to go through the spiritual exercises.

About this time it happened that the fervour of Alphonsus began to grow a little cool. The games, innocent indeed in themselves in which he began to indulge, the theatres to which from time to time he used to go by his father's orders, the brilliant marriages which were proposed to him (but from which, by a hidden instinct of the Holy Spirit, he was most averse), the praises and flatteries which reached his ears from all quarters—all these could not but exercise an influence over him, and so by degrees things came to such a pass that he used to omit, even for the most trivial reasons, his accustomed exercises of piety. "If I had remained long in this state of tepidity" (he used afterwards to say) "I should certainly have fallen headlong into the greatest excesses." But the innocence of his life, which,

according to the Roman Breviary, was never stained by mortal sin, was soon delivered from the great danger to which it was exposed; for when he was going through the Spiritual Exercises as usual, he experienced a complete renewal of spirit, and not only returned to his former habits of virtue, but even went beyond all that he had hitherto practised.

Not long afterwards a providential event induced Alphonsus to make a complete break from the world. He had undertaken the defence of a case of the highest importance, and had spent a whole month in mastering all its details. When the day for hearing the case had arrived, he went full of confidence to the court, made his opening speech with his usual eloquence, quoting the words of the law, and confirming his position with what seemed to be indisputable arguments. But just as he was flattering himself that, with the applause of all, the decision would be given in his favour, the whole of his argument was suddenly upset by a few words from the lawyer on the opposite side, who pointed out that Alphonsus had mistaken a negative for an affirmative. Alphonsus stopped in confusion, and immediately recognising his mistake, was overwhelmed with emotion, fearing that he would be suspected of unfair dealing. Blushing with shame, he hurried from the court, exclaiming: "World, I know thee now!—no longer shalt thou see me." On entering his house, he betook himself to his room, where, like another Paul, he remained three days and three nights without eating or drinking. When at length he left his solitude, he had resolutely determined to bid farewell to the law courts, whose dangers he had learned by sad experience.*

This first heavenly grace was soon followed by a second and much more extraordinary one. On a certain day, when Alphonsus was in the Hospital of Incurables, attending the sick, he suddenly saw himself surrounded

* The whole case would seem to have turned on whether the fief in dispute was held under Lombard or French law, and Alphonsus could not explain how he overlooked a clause in the documents which destroyed his whole case. A chapter—entitled "The Road to Damascus"—in Father Berthe's *Life of St. Alphonsus*, graphically describes the scene in court that day. (2 Vols. Duffy and Co., Dublin.)—ED.

by a bright light. The whole house seemed to be shaken as by an earthquake, and a voice repeated in his inmost heart these words : " Forsake the world, and give thyself wholly to Me." Although he was struck by the strangeness of the thing, he did not leave off what he was doing. But when his work was finished, and he was on the point of leaving the hospital, the same voice was again clearly heard, and this time in his very ears : " Forsake the world, and give thyself wholly to Me." Alphonsus then waits no longer, but exclaims, with tearful eyes : " My God, here I am ! Do with me what Thou wilt." And then, moved by a divine impulse, he directs his steps to the Church of Our Lady, and there, encircled with a celestial light, he gives himself up entirely to the service of God, and promises that he will renounce the world. As a pledge of his fidelity, he takes off his sword, which he wore as the mark of his rank, and lays it on the altar of the holy Virgin. This took place in the Church of Our Lady of Ransom, of the Redemption of Captives; as though Divine Providence wished to show that Alphonsus henceforth would devote himself to the work of redemption by founding the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

The day on which this happened was ever a memorable one to St. Alphonsus as long as he lived, and in his humility he used to call it the day of his conversion; and justly so, for it was then that he offered himself as a complete holocaust to God. The moment he knew the way along which he was to walk, Alphonsus entered upon it with alacrity. He formed the resolution of becoming a priest, and of following the Most Holy Redeemer in the salvation of souls. But it can scarcely be expressed how great was the opposition which his proposal met with. His father left nothing untried to shake his resolution, for he desired his son to occupy a brilliant position in the world. But threats and entreaties were equally vain —Alphonsus overcame all with heroic courage; and on the 23rd of October, 1723, he put on the ecclesiastical dress, and enrolled himself in the service of God. Since he well knew that *the lips of the priest shall keep know-*

ledge, he applied himself with the greatest diligence to the study of sacred theology. He made so admirable a use of his time that three years had scarcely elapsed when he was judged to be perfectly qualified for all the duties of the apostolic ministry. Without delay he was ordained priest on the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, 1726, and celebrated his first holy Mass at Naples, with all the ardour of a seraph, being then in his thirty-first year.

Evening Meditation

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

"*Charity endureth all things.*"

HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST WITH A STRONG LOVE DOES NOT CEASE TO LOVE HIM IN THE MIDST OF TEMPTATIONS AND DESOLATIONS.

I.

Let these souls so dear to God, and who are resolutely determined to belong entirely to Him, take comfort, although at the same time they see themselves deprived of every consolation. Their desolation is a sign of their being very acceptable to God, and that He has for them a place prepared in His heavenly kingdom, which overflows with consolations as full as they are lasting. And let them hold for certain that the more they are afflicted in the present life, so much the more shall they be consoled in eternity: *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul*—(Ps. xciii. 19). For the encouragement of souls in desolation, I will here mention what is related in the Life of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, who for the space of forty years was tormented by the most fearful interior trials, by temptations, by fears of being at enmity with God, and of being even quite forsaken by Him. Her

afflictions were so excruciating and unremitting that she declared her sole ray of comfort came from the thought of death. Moreover she said: "I am so furiously assaulted that I know not where to hide my poor soul. I seem at times on the point of losing all patience, and of giving up all as entirely lost." "The tyrant of temptation is so relentless," she says, "that any hour of the day I would gladly barter it with the loss of my life; and sometimes it happens that I can neither eat nor sleep."

During the last eight or nine years of her life her temptations became still more violent. Mother de Scatel said that her saintly Mother de Chantal suffered a continual interior martyrdom night and day, at prayer, at work, and even during sleep; so that she felt the deepest compassion for her. The Saint endured assaults against every virtue (except chastity), and had likewise to contend with doubts, darkness, and disgust. Sometimes God would withdraw all lights from her, and seem indignant with her, and just on the point of expelling her from Him, so that terror drove her to look in some other direction for relief: but failing to find any, she was obliged to return to look on God, and to abandon herself to His mercy. She seemed each moment ready to yield to the violence of her temptations. The Divine assistance did not, indeed, forsake her; but it seemed to her to have done so, since, instead of finding satisfaction in anything she found only weariness and anguish in prayer, in reading spiritual books, in Communion, and in all other exercises of piety. Her sole resource in this state of derelicton was to look upon God, and to let Him do His will.

II.

The Saint said: "In all my abandonment my very life is daily a new cross to me, and my incapability of action adds considerably to its heaviness." And it was for this reason she compared herself to a sick person overwhelmed with sufferings, unable to turn from one side to the other, speechless, so as not to be able to tell of his ills, and blind, so as not to discern whether the

attendants are administering to him medicine or poison. And then, weeping bitterly, she added: "I seem to be without Faith, without Hope, and without love for my God." Nevertheless the Saint maintained throughout her serenity of countenance and affability in conversation, and kept her mind fixedly bent on God, in the bosom of Whose blessed will she constantly reposed. Wherefore, St. Francis de Sales, who was her director, and knew well what an object of predilection her beautiful soul was to Almighty God, wrote thus of her: "Her heart resembled a deaf musician, who, though he may sing most exquisitely, can derive no pleasure from it himself." And to herself he wrote as follows: "You must endeavour to serve your Saviour solely through love of His blessed will, utterly deprived of consolations, and overwhelmed by a deluge of fears and sadness." It is thus that the Saints are formed:

"Long did the chisels ring around,
Long did the mallet's blows rebound,
Long worked the head and toiled the hand,
Ere stood thy stones as now they stand."

The Saints are precisely these choice stones, of whom the Church sings, which are reduced to shapeliness and beauty by the strokes of the chisel, that is, by temptations, by fears, by darkness, and other torments, internal and external, till at length they are made worthy to be enthroned in the blessed kingdom of Paradise.

I wish to belong wholly to Thee, O my God; and I give Thee my body, my soul, my will, and my liberty. I will no longer live for myself, but for Thee alone, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Love, and my All: *Deus meus et Omnia*! My God and my All! I desire to become a Saint, and I hope it of Thee. Afflict me as Thou wilt, deprive me of all; only deprive me not of Thy grace and of Thy love. O Mary, the hope of sinners, great is thy power with God; I confide fully in thy intercession: I entreat thee by thy love of Jesus Christ, help me, and make me a saint!

Wednesday—Ninth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"*PATIENCE HATH A PERFECT WORK.*"

When you are visited by God with any infirmity, or loss, or persecutions, humble yourself and say with the Good Thief on the Cross : *We receive the due reward of our deeds.* Let my consolation be that the Lord may afflict me and spare me not here below, that He may spare me in eternity.

I.

When you are visited by God with any infirmity, or loss, or persecution, humble yourself, and say with the good thief : *We receive the due reward of our deeds*—(Luke xxiii. 41). Lord, I deserve this cross because I have offended Thee. Humble yourself and be comforted, for the chastisement that you receive is a proof that God wishes to pardon the eternal punishment due to your sins. *Who will grant me,* says Job . . . *that this may be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not*—(Job vi. 8-10). Let this be my consolation, that the Lord may afflict me and may not spare me here below in order to spare me hereafter. O God, how can he who has deserved hell complain if the Lord send him a cross ! Were the pains of hell trifling, still, because they are eternal, we should gladly exchange them for all temporal sufferings, for they have an end. But in hell there are all kinds of pain—they are all intense and all everlasting. And though you should have preserved Baptismal innocence and have never deserved hell, you have at least merited a long Purgatory : and do you know

what Purgatory is? St. Thomas says that the souls in Purgatory are tormented by the very same kind of fire that torments the damned. Hence St. Augustine says that the pain of that fire surpasses every torment that man can suffer in this life. Be content, then, to be chastised in this life rather than in the next; particularly since by accepting crosses with patience in this life your sufferings will be meritorious; but hereafter you will have to suffer without merit.

II.

Console yourself in suffering with the hope of Paradise. St. Joseph Calasanctius used to say: "To gain Heaven all labour is small." And before him the Apostle said: *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us*—(Rom. viii. 18). It would be but little to suffer all the pains of this earth for the enjoyment of a single moment in Heaven: how much more, then, ought we to embrace the crosses God sends us when we know that the short sufferings of this life will merit for us eternal felicity. *That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us . . . an eternal weight of glory*—(2 Cor. iv. 17). We should not feel sadness but consolation of spirit when God sends us sufferings here below. They who pass to eternity with the greatest merit shall receive the greatest reward. It is on this account that the Lord sends us tribulations. Virtues, which are the fountains of merit, are practised only by acts. They who are exposed to the most frequent annoyances make the most frequent acts of patience; they who are most frequently insulted make most frequent acts of meekness. Hence St. James says: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life*—(James i. 12). Blessed is he who suffers afflictions with peace, for when he shall be thus proved he shall receive the crown of eternal life.

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

The manner of life which Alphonsus thenceforth adopted, during the two years he lived at Naples as a secular priest and as a member of the Congregation of the Propaganda in Naples, is described in glowing terms in the Bull of his canonization. These are the words of the Supreme Pontiff, Gregory XVI. : " Having received Holy Orders and been raised to the dignity of the priesthood, he applied all his energies to extend on every side the glory of God, to sow the seeds of virtue in the minds of men, and to pluck up the roots of vice. Persuaded that the labours of an apostle cannot be productive of abundant fruit unless he teach as well by example as by words, it became the chief object of his care to exhibit himself by the practice of every kind of virtues ' as a minister of God' and a dispenser of His mysteries.' Of chastity, which he had long since consecrated by vow to God, he was ever the most watchful guardian, incessantly exerting all the powers of his mind, and employing every movement of his body to preserve it free from the slightest stain. To attain this object with perfect security he dedicated that virtue with filial confidence to the care of the Mother of God. With so vehement an impulse of love was he carried towards God, that his attention was unceasingly fixed upon Him, and nothing seems to have afforded him pleasure but to think and speak of God. Since the love of God so ardently inflamed him, it is easy to conclude that he cherished a fervent charity for his neighbour. No toil, no trouble was spared by him in order to recall men steeped in vice and wickedness to the loving embraces of God. It was his constant occupation to visit the hospitals for the purpose of assisting the sick, and of

aiding, by his presence, those in particular who were in immediate danger of death. Moved by the same charity, he used to hear confessions with the greatest patience, and to spend in the performance of that office not only whole days, but also a considerable part of the night. Hence, too, was he in the habit of addressing from the pulpit his crowded audience in strains of such fervid language as to conquer and break down the obstinacy of the most abandoned sinners. He exhibited to them the foul baseness of the crimes which had so hardened their hearts, and aroused in their minds so lively a feeling of sorrow that they were moved to tears, and on many occasions filled the sacred edifice with their sobs and lamentations." Such are the words of Gregory XVI.

This admirable zeal for souls was, in union with his love for Jesus, the characteristic virtue of Alphonsus. It already showed itself in the very beginning of his priestly life in such a manner as to foreshadow what he would be in the future—the great apostle of the poor and of the country people. It is true that he readily bestowed his time and his labour on all kinds of men; yet it was the poor and the abandoned who were ever the special objects of his care. This can be seen from the work which he effected among the Neapolitan day-labourers and porters. After he had been ordained deacon he used to bring those poor men together at certain times into an appointed place, and then exhort them to the love of Jesus Christ. And when the number of his hearers gradually increased, he dispersed them through the town in different assemblies, arranging everything so that the members might urge on one another to the practice of every virtue. Such was the origin of the famous Institution of the "Chapels," which has lasted in Naples up to the present day, and which has been the means of salvation to countless numbers of workmen. But Alphonsus did not confine himself to the poor of Naples only; his burning zeal spread itself beyond the limits of the city. In his compassion for the country people, he went through the fields, and villages, and

hamlets, preaching the word of God, so that to him might aptly be applied the words of Scripture: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me: wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart*—(Luke iv. 18).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

How pleasing it is to Jesus Christ that we should often remember His Passion, and the shameful death He suffered for us, can be well understood from His having instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar for this very end, that there might ever dwell in us the lively memory of the love He bore to us in sacrificing Himself on the Cross for our salvation. Let us, then, recollect that on the night preceding His death Jesus instituted this Sacrament of love, and, when He had distributed His Body to His disciples, He said to them, and through them to all of us, that in receiving the Holy Communion we should bear in mind what great things He suffered for us: *As often as ye shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, ye shall show the death of the Lord* —(1 Cor. xi. 26). Therefore, in the Mass the Holy Church ordains that after the consecration the celebrant shall say, in the Name of Jesus Christ, *As often as ye do this, ye shall do it in memory of me* (Canon of the Mass). And the angelic St. Thomas writes: "That the memory of the great things Jesus did for us might ever remain with us, He left us His own Body to be received as our food." The Saint then goes on to say that through this Sacrament is preserved the memory of the boundless love which Jesus Christ has shown us in His Passion.

If we were to endure injuries and stripes for the sake of a friend, and were then to learn that our friend, when

he heard anyone speak of what we had done, would not pay any heed to it, but turned the conversation, and said : " Let us talk of something else"—what pain we should suffer at the neglect of the ungrateful man ! And, on the other hand, how glad we should be to find that our friend admitted that he was under an eternal obligation to us, that he constantly bore it in mind, and spoke of it with affection and with tears.

II.

The Saints, knowing how much it pleases Jesus Christ that we should often call to mind His Passion, have been almost perpetually occupied in meditating on the pains and insults which our loving Redeemer suffered during His whole life, and still more in His death. St. Augustine writes that there is no more profitable occupation for the soul than to meditate daily on the Passion of the Lord. It was revealed by God to a holy anchorite that there is no exercise more adapted to inflame the heart with divine love than the thought of the death of Jesus Christ. And to St. Gertrude, as Blosius records, it was revealed that as often as we look with devotion upon the Crucifix, so often does Jesus look upon us with love. Blosius adds that to consider or read any portion of the Passion brings greater profit than any other devout exercise. Therefore St. Bonaventure writes : "O Passion worthy of love, which renders divine him who meditates upon it !" And speaking of the Wounds of the Crucified, he calls them Wounds which pierce the hardest hearts, and inflame the coldest souls with divine love.

It is repeated in the life of the Blessed Bernard of Corlione, a Capuchin, that when his Brother-Religious desired to teach him to read, he went to take advice from Him Who was crucified, and that the Lord replied to him : " What is reading ? What are books ? I Who was crucified will be thy Book, in which thou mayest read the love I bore thee." Jesus Crucified was also the beloved Book of St. Philip Benizi ; and when the Saint was dying, he desired to have his Book given him. Those who stood by, however, did not know what book

he wanted; but Brother Ubaldo, his confidential friend, offered to him the Image of the Crucified, on which the Saint said: "This is my Book!" and, kissing the sacred Wounds, breathed out his blessed soul.

For myself, in my spiritual works, I have often written of the Passion of Jesus Christ, but yet I think that it will not be unprofitable to devout souls if I here add many other points and reflections which I have read in various books, or which have occurred to myself; and I have determined to commit them to writing for the use of others, but especially for my own profit. I am composing this little treatise in the seventy-seventh year of my life, and nigh unto death, and hence I am desirous to prolong these considerations by way of preparing myself for the great day of account. And, in fact, I make my own poor meditations on these very points; often and often reading some portion, in order that, whenever my last hour shall come, I may find myself occupied in keeping before my eyes Jesus Crucified, Who is my only hope, and thus I hope to breathe out my soul into His hands.

Thursday—Ninth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"PATIENCE HATH A PERFECT WORK."

To be in tribulation in this world is a great sign of predestination. "To be afflicted here on earth," says St. Gregory, "belongs to the elect for whom is reserved the beatitude of eternity." Hence we find in the Lives of the Saints that all, without exception, had been loaded with crosses.

I.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life —(James i. 12). This thought made St. Agapitus, Martyr, a boy of fifteen years, say, when the tyrant ordered his head to be encompassed with burning coals : "It is very little to bear the burning of my head, which shall be crowned with glory in Heaven." This thought made Job exclaim : *If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?*—(Job ii. 10). Yes, if we have gladly received good things, why should we not also receive with greater joy temporal evils, by which we shall acquire the eternal goods of Paradise? This thought also filled with jubilation the hermit found singing in a wood though his body was so covered with ulcers that his flesh was falling to pieces. When asked if it were he who was singing, he said : Yes, I sing, and I have reason to sing; for between me and God there is nothing but the filthy wall of my body. I now see it falling to pieces, and therefore I sing, because I see that the time is at hand when I shall go to enjoy my Lord. This thought made St. Francis of Assisi say : "So great is the good which I expect, that to me every pain gives delight." In a word, the Saints feel consoled when they are in tribulation, and are afflicted when they enjoy earthly consolations. We read in the Teresian Chronicles that in reciting these words of the Office : *When wilt thou comfort me?*—(Ps. cxviii. 82) Mother Isabella of the Angels used to say them so fast that she would anticipate the other Sisters. Being asked why she did so, she answered : "I am afraid that God may give me comfort in this life."

II.

To be in tribulation in this world is a great sign of predestination. "To be afflicted here below," says St. Gregory, "belongs to the elect, for whom is reserved the beatitude of eternity." Hence we find in the Lives of the Saints, that all, without exception, have been

loaded with crosses. This is precisely what St. Jerome wrote to the virgin Eustochia : " Seek," says the holy Doctor, " and you shall find that every Saint has been subject to tribulations : Solomon, alone, lived in the midst of delights, and therefore perhaps he was lost." The Apostle has said that all the predestined must be found like to Jesus Christ : *Whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son*—(Rom. viii. 29). But the life of Jesus Christ was a life of continual suffering ; hence the same Apostle says : *Yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him*—(Rom. viii. 17). If we suffer with Jesus Christ we shall also be glorified with Jesus Christ.

But we shall not be glorified with Him unless we suffer with patience like our Saviour, who *when he was reviled did not revile ; when he suffered he threatened not*—(1 Pet. ii. 23). St. Gregory says that as to suffer with patience is a mark of predestination, so to suffer with impatience is a presage of damnation. Hence the Lord tells us that we shall attain to salvation only by suffering with patience : *In your patience you shall possess your souls*—(Luke xxi. 19). And let us be persuaded that God sends us tribulations only because He seeks our welfare. By them He wishes to detach us from earthly pleasures, which may occasion the loss of our eternal salvation.

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

Worn out by a constant succession of labours, and weakened by the austerities of his life, Alphonsus withdrew with some of the companions of his apostolate, for the sake of a little rest, into a solitary spot called Santa Maria dei Monti, near Scala. This was in the month of

May in the year 1731. The inhabitants of the place were poor peasants and shepherds, whose knowledge of religion was very small, and whose spiritual destitution was extreme. Alphonsus was moved with pity on learning their sad state. When he saw them coming in crowds to the lonely chapel, where he was accustomed to spend a great part of his time before the Blessed Sacrament, and eagerly begging for a spiritual alms, he at once devoted himself to their service, and gave all his attention to instruct them in Christian Doctrine, and prepare them for a devout reception of the Sacraments. Thus it happened that the time set aside for repose was employed most fruitfully for the salvation of souls, and at the same time an ardent desire was implanted in the soul of Alphonsus of henceforth devoting himself in a special manner to the service of such poor, abandoned beings. The desire came from God; it was the seed from which in a short time was to spring the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. But we must now briefly relate how this important work began, and how it was brought to completion.

Alphonsus returned not long afterwards to the town of Scala, in order to celebrate a Novena with the people in the cathedral. Here God was awaiting His servant, in order to manifest His will to him. There was in a convent in the city a certain nun—Sister Celeste Crostarosa by name—who was frequently favoured by God with extraordinary graces. This holy nun was a member of the Community which had been founded by Monsignor Falcoja in the town of Scala in the year 1719. She was born in Naples on the 31st of October, 1696, being, consequently, just one month younger than Alphonsus. God made known to her many things concerning the Institute of the Most Holy Redeemer; and Falcoja, who had in the meantime become Bishop of Castellamare, after mature consideration, charged Alphonsus, in the spring of 1731, to give the spiritual exercises to the nuns of the Most Holy Saviour, with the permission of the Bishop of Scala. This Alphonsus accordingly did; and when he returned again in the

autumn, Sister Celeste had a vision on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, in which our Divine Lord, accompanied by St. Francis, appeared to her, and showed her a number of priests zealously engaged in instructing a countless multitude of men, who were scattered through villages and hamlets, deprived of spiritual aid. The leader and director of these priests was Alphonsus. Whilst the holy religious was contemplating this vision, these words sounded in her ear : " That is the man whom I have chosen as My instrument in this work, which is to glorify My Name." She did not think it right to conceal a fact of so great importance, and spoke of it to Alphonsus, who was greatly agitated on hearing a revelation which coincided so perfectly with his own desires. Being in doubt as to the course which he ought to take, he determined at once to give himself up to the most fervent prayer, and to redouble his austerities, in order to obtain a more certain knowledge of the Divine Will. His hopes were not deceived. In a short time he clearly perceived that he was called by God to this great work, both by the heavenly light with which his soul was abundantly illumined, and also by the advice which he received from many men illustrious both for their learning and their sanctity. He was confirmed in this conviction by the approbation of his director, the saintly Bishop Falcoja. From this time Alphonsus bound himself by vow to depend entirely on the direction of this holy prelate. Moreover, in addition to all this, the will of God was made plain by a manifest miracle. One day when the nun of whom we have spoken, was eagerly maintaining in the presence of her sisters the truth of the revelation made to her, one of her hearers exclaimed : " Well, I shall believe it when Sister Mary Magdalene is cured." Wonderful to relate, this Religious, who was then out of her mind, was at that very instant freed from her mental disorder.

When the will of God had been once made known to him, Alphonsus, relying principally on the advice of Bishop Falcoja, resolutely determined to begin the work. As soon as his intentions were known, several distinguished

men felt themselves divinely called to enter his Congregation. Amongst these must be mentioned a young man of good family whose past life had been far from edifying, but who now received a vocation to join Alphonsus, which was evidently miraculous. This youth, who was called Vitus Curzio, himself related what had happened. "I dreamt," says he, "that I was standing at the foot of a high and steep mountain which many priests were trying to ascend. I wished to follow them, but at each attempt my foot slipped, and I fell back. Seeing that all my efforts to advance were useless, I began to feel exceedingly disheartened and sad. At last, one of the priests taking compassion on me, stretched out his hand, and with his help I ascended the mountain with the rest." Such was the young man's dream. A few days after he met Alphonsus in Naples, and, struck with astonishment, he recognised in him the priest whom he had seen in his dream, and who had helped him to ascend the mountain. Moved by Divine grace he at once obeyed the wonderful call he had received from Heaven, and became the first Lay-brother of the new Institute.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Adam sinned and rebelled against God, and, being the first man, and the progenitor of all men, he fell into a state of perdition, together with the whole human race. The injury was done to God; so that neither Adam nor all the rest of mankind, by all the sacrifices they could have offered, even of their own lives, could furnish a worthy satisfaction to the Divine majesty which was offended. There was need that a Divine person should satisfy Divine justice. Behold, then, the Son of God,

moved to deep compassion for men, and excited by the bowels of His mercy, offered Himself to take human flesh and to die for men, that He might thus give to God a complete satisfaction for all the sins of men and obtain for them the Divine grace they had lost.

Our loving Redeemer thus came into this life, and became Man, in order that He might find a remedy for all the miseries which sin had brought upon men. At the same time, He chose to lead men to an observance of the Divine precepts, and thus to the acquisition of eternal life, not only by His instructions, but also by the example of His own holy life. For this end Jesus Christ renounced all honours, delights, and riches, which He might have enjoyed upon this earth, and which belonged to Him as Lord of the world; and He chose for Himself a life of humility, poverty, and tribulation, until He died in anguish upon a Cross.

The Jews were possessed with a delusion that the Messias would come upon earth to triumph over all His enemies by force of arms, and that, having conquered them, and acquired the rule of all the earth, He would make His followers rich and glorious. But if the Messias had been what the Jews imagined, a Prince triumphant and honoured by all men as the Sovereign of all the earth, He would not have been the Redeemer promised by God and predicted by the Prophets. This He Himself declared, when He replied to Pilate : *My kingdom is not of this world*—(Jo. xviii. 36). On this St. Fulgentius writes : "Why, Herod, art thou thus troubled? This King Who is born is not come to conquer kings in battle, but wonderfully to subdue them by His death."

II.

The Jews had two false ideas regarding the Redeemer Whom they expected. The first was the idea that the spiritual and eternal blessings with which the Prophets foretold that the Messias would enrich His people, were earthly and temporal blessings : *There shall be faith in thy days; the riches of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is thy treasure*

—(Is. xxxiii. 6). These were the glorious blessings promised by the Redeemer: faith, the knowledge of virtue, and holy fear. These were the riches of salvation which He had promised. Besides this, He promised He would bring healing for the penitent, pardon for sinners, and liberty to the captives of Satan: *He hath sent me to bring tidings to those who are meek, that I should heal those who are contrite of heart, and preach pardon to the captives, and liberty to those who are in bondage* —(Isaias, lxi. 1). The other delusion of the Jews was that what was predicted by the Prophets respecting the second coming of the Saviour when He should come to judge the world at the end of ages, was to be understood of His first coming. David wrote of the future Messias, that He would conquer the princes of the earth, and beat down the pride of many, and with the force of His sword would subdue the whole earth: *The Lord, upon thy right hand, shall beat down kings in the day of his wrath; he shall judge among the nations; he shall shatter the heads of many upon the earth*—(Ps. cix. 5, 6). And the Prophet Jeremias wrote: *The sword of the Lord shall devour from the one end of the earth to the other*—(Jer xii. 12). But all this is to be understood of the second advent, when He shall come as Judge to condemn the wicked.

Friday—Ninth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"*PATIENCE HATH A PERFECT WORK.*"

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross and follow me. These words of our Lord give us to understand that he who is not

willing to suffer, but refuses the cross, must not pretend to be Christ's disciple or expect to follow Him to Paradise.

I.

"The world is bitter, and it is loved," says St. Augustine; "if it were sweet, how it would be loved!" The world is bitter because all its delights do not content the heart of man, and because they all ultimately terminate in bitterness and remorse of conscience; but still it is loved. Imagine, then, says the Saint, were it sweet, how intensely we would love it, and how completely forget the soul, Heaven and God! To wean an infant the mother puts gall on the breasts. It is thus God treats us. He makes the very pleasures of this earth bitter, that, by detaching our hearts from them, we may pant after the eternal delights which He has prepared in Heaven for all who love Him. It was for this end that our loving Saviour came on earth to suffer, that we might not refuse to imitate His example. *Christ,* says St. Peter, *suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps*—(1 Pet. ii. 21). Behold how He invites us to follow: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*—(Matt. xvi. 24). As if He were to say: He who is not willing to suffer, and refuses the cross, let him cease to pretend to be My disciple, or to expect to follow Me to Paradise.

II.

The desire of pleasing God is the sublime end which a soul should have in embracing sufferings. Ecclesiasticus says that some show friendship only in the time of prosperity, and abandon a friend in his adversity: *There is a friend for his own occasion, and he will not abide in the day of thy trouble*—(Ecclus. vi. 8). But the most certain testimony of love is to suffer with cheerfulness for the person loved. The sacrifice most agreeable to God consists in embracing with patience all the crosses He sends. *Charity is patient . . . beareth all things*—(1 Cor. xiii. 4, 7). Love bears all things:

external crosses; loss of health; loss of property, of honours, of relatives, of friends: interior crosses, anguish, temptations, sorrows, desolation of spirit. It is by patience that virtue is proved. Hence, in the Lives of the Saints, we usually find a description of their patience under afflictions. It is thus the Lord proves our fidelity. The devil tempts us, and God also tempts us. The devil tempts us in order to bring us to perdition, God tempts us in order to prove us: *As gold in the furnace he hath proved them*—(Wis. iii. 6). As gold is proved by fire, so God proves the love of His lovers by the fire of tribulation. Hence to be in tribulation is a sign that the soul is dear to God. *Because thou wast acceptable to God*, said the Angel to Tobias, *it was necessary that temptation should prove thee* —(Tob. xii. 13). St. Jerome says that when God sends a person an occasion of suffering He confers a greater favour than if He gave him power to raise the dead to life. Because, adds the Saint, when we work miracles we are debtors to God, but when we bear afflictions with patience, God is, in a certain manner, our debtor.

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

It would be too long to relate here all the difficulties with which, for more than a year, the holy founder had to contend. When once his intention was known, all Naples was in commotion against him; and he, whom all had formerly held in admiration, now became the common laughing-stock. All his friends withdrew from him, and his former superiors and associates of the Congregation of the Propaganda vied with one another in the bitter attacks which they made upon what they called his obstinacy and his visionary schemes. But no one was more opposed to Alphonsus than his own father. He left

no stone unturned in order to shake his son's resolution, and finding that threats were of no avail, he had recourse to tears and entreaties. One day he entered his son's room and fell upon his neck, shedding an abundance of tears, and for three hours he held him in a close embrace, imploring him not to abandon his unhappy father. But prayers and tears alike were useless. Alphonsus condescended not to flesh and blood. Victorious in this long conflict, he now bade adieu to Naples, and went to lay the foundations of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, together with a few companions, who were to meet him at this time at Scala. He entered this town on the 8th of November, 1732.

And now a new tempest of troubles was about to burst upon our Saint. The Congregation had scarcely come into existence when discord broke out amongst its members. Each one held a different opinion as to the special work in which the missionaries ought to engage. Many desired that they should add the instruction of youth to the labours of the missions, but Alphonsus was firm in his opinion that his Institute ought to have for its sole end the preaching of the Gospel to the poor and the most abandoned. Arguments were discussed on both sides, but no agreement could be come to either regarding the scope of the Institute or its rules; and finally the little flock was dispersed, and the holy founder was left with only two companions—Father Caesar Sportelli, and Brother Vitus Curzio. This abandonment was a cruel blow to the tender heart of Alphonsus. When the thing became known, the enemies of the Institute exulted for joy, and indulged without restraint in abuse and ridicule. To add to the trials of Alphonsus, Satan involved his soul in a thick darkness, and in an overwhelming sadness; and that nothing might be wanting to his misery, even Bishop Falcoja himself, his confessor, treated him harshly and seemed to abandon him. Alphonsus went to him for consolation, but the bishop said to him, coldly: "Will you also go away? God has not need of anyone to do His work." But then, seeing the deep affliction of Alphonsus, he encouraged him, and bade him persevere

in carrying out his Divine vocation. The straits to which Alphonsus now saw himself reduced would have caused another utterly to lose heart, but they did but urge him on to form a magnanimous resolve, which he confirmed by vow, that, even if he could get no one to help him, he would, nevertheless, devote his whole life to evangelising the poor. This heroic resolve at once had its reward. The mind of Alphonsus recovered its usual tranquility, and God, who is ever ready to help those who trust in Him, sent him new companions and fellow-workers. The grief of the holy man at the loss of his first associates was soon changed into joy when he saw his solitude peopled by promising subjects, and from this time the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer was established on a firm footing. The little seed was gradually growing into a mighty tree, which was to extend its branches unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

Nothing could be imagined more humble than the first beginnings of the Institute. Poverty the most complete reigned in the house at Scala. As they had no tabernacle, Alphonsus placed the Blessed Sacrament in a box which he had decorated with ribbons and garlands. The altar had no other ornament but some little bouquets of artificial roses and other flowers. But, in spite of its poverty, the little sanctuary breathed a heavenly sweetness. There Alphonsus, wholly absorbed in the love of Jesus, used to spend whole nights in the presence of the Most Holy Sacrament. Close to the house was a half-ruined grotto, to which the Saint frequently withdrew, in order to give himself to prayer and to frightful austerities. In this place, tradition tells us, that he was favoured with many visions of the Virgin Mother of God, who bestowed upon him numerous proofs of her maternal affection. Alphonsus confessed that it was here he used to discuss the welfare of his Congregation with this loving Mother. Thus the remembrance of this grotto was always dear to him, and as often as he returned to Scala he used to visit it, exclaiming: "Oh, my grotto, my beloved grotto! would that I could enjoy thee as in the days gone by!"

When once the Congregation was established, the chief aim of its founder was to work hard for its propagation. Henceforth it was his home for thirty happy years, until 1762; and during all this time he was in the midst of his children as a burning and a shining light, by the holiness of his life and by his devotion through love of Jesus, to the work of redemption. This part of the saint's life was taken up with three important occupations, namely, the holy missions, the government of his Congregation, and the publication of his writings.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

When the Prophets spoke of the first advent, in which He would accomplish the work of Redemption, they most clearly foretold that the Redeemer would live upon this earth a life of poverty and contempt. This was what was written by the Prophet Zacharias, when speaking of the life of Jesus Christ : *Behold thy king cometh to thee the just one, and the Saviour; he is poor, and sitteth upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass*—(Zach. ix. 9). All this was specially fulfilled when He entered Jerusalem sitting upon a young ass, and was honorably received as the desired Messias, as St. John writes : *And Jesus found an ass and sat upon it, as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion, behold thy king cometh to thee, sitting upon an ass's colt*—(Jo. xii. 14, 15). We know, also that He was poor from the time of His birth, being born in Bethlehem, a place of no celebrity, and in a cave : *And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art little among the thousands of Juda; from thee cometh forth to me he who is to be the ruler of Israel; and his going forth is from the beginning and from the days of eternity*—(Mich. v. 2). This Prophecy, also, is referred to by St. Matthew and St.

John. Further, also, the Prophet Osee writes : *From Egypt I have called my son*—(Os. xi. 1), which was fulfilled when Jesus Christ was carried as an Infant into Egypt, where He remained about seven years, as a stranger in the midst of a barbarous race, far from His kindred and friends, a thing sufficient to make His life one of poverty. And so, also, He continued to live the life of the poor when He had returned to Judea. He Himself foretold by the mouth of David, that throughout His whole life He would be poor and afflicted : *I am poor, and in labours from my youth*—(Ps. lxxxvii. 16).

II.

Almighty God could not consider His justice truly satisfied by all the sacrifices men could offer, even of their own lives; and therefore He ordained that His own Son should take a human body, and become a Victim worthy to reconcile God with men, and obtain salvation for them. *Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared for me*—(Heb. x. 5). The only-begotten Son offered Himself willingly to be a sacrifice for us, and came down on earth in order that He might accomplish the sacrifice with His death, and thus complete the Redemption of man. *Then said I : Behold, I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O God* !—(Heb. x. 5-7).

The Lord said, speaking to sinners, *Why should I strike you any more*?—(Is. i. 5). This God said in order that we should understand that, however much He might punish those who offended Him, their punishments would never be sufficient to make reparation to His offended honour; and therefore He committed it to His own Son to make satisfaction for the sins of men, because His Son alone could give worthy satisfaction to Divine justice. Therefore He declared, by Isaias speaking of Jesus being made a Victim for our sins, *For the wickedness of my people I have stricken him*—(Is. liii. 8). Nor was God satisfied with a light satisfaction, but chose to see His Son consumed with torments : *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity*—(Is. liii. 10).

O my Jesus, O Victim of love, consumed by pangs upon the Cross to atone for my sins, I am ready to die with grief when I think that I have so often despised Thee, after Thou hast loved me so much. Oh, suffer it not that I should continue longer ungrateful for Thy goodness. Draw me wholly to Thee; grant it through the merits of that Blood which Thou hast poured forth for me.

Saturday—Ninth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL SINNERS.

The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Bridget that there was no sinner in the world, however much he might be at enmity with God, who will not return to Him if he would only have recourse to her, and ask her assistance. Noe's Ark was a true figure of Mary, for as in it all kinds of beasts were saved, so under Mary's mantle all sinners find refuge.

I.

The devout Blosius declares that "Mary is the only refuge of those who have offended God, the asylum of all who are oppressed by temptation, calamity, or persecution. This Mother is all mercy, benignity, and sweetness, not only to the just, but also to despairing sinners; so that no sooner does she perceive them coming to her, and seeking her help from their hearts, than she aids them, welcomes them, and obtains their pardon from her Son. She knows not how to despise any one, however unworthy he may be of mercy, and therefore denies

her protection to none; she consoles all, and is no sooner invoked than she helps whoever it may be that invokes her. She by her sweetness often awakens, and draws to devotion to her, sinners who are the most at enmity with God and the most deeply plunged in the lethargy of sin; and then, by the same means, she excites them effectually, and prepares them for grace, and thus renders them fit for the kingdom of Heaven. God has created this His beloved Daughter of so compassionate and sweet a disposition that no one can fear to have recourse to her." The pious author concludes in these words: "It is impossible for any one to perish who carefully, and with humility, cultivates devotion towards this Divine Mother."

In Ecclesiasticus Mary is called a plane-tree: *As a plane-tree I was exalted*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 19). And she is so called that sinners may understand that as the plane-tree gives shelter to travellers from the heat of the sun, so does Mary invite them to take shelter under her protection from the wrath of God, justly enkindled against them. St. Bonaventure remarks that the Prophet Isaias complained of the times in which he lived, saying: *Behold thou art angry, and we have sinned . . . there is none . . . that riseth up and taketh hold of thee*—(Is. lxiv. 5-7). And then he makes the following commentary: "It is true, O Lord, that at the time there was none to raise up sinners and withhold Thy wrath, for Mary was not yet born"; "before Mary," to quote the Saint's own words, "there was no one who could thus dare to restrain the arm of God." But now, if God is angry with a sinner, and Mary takes him under her protection, she withholds the avenging arm of her Son, and saves him. "And so," continues the same Saint, "no one can be found more fit for this office than Mary, who seizes the sword of Divine justice with her own hands to prevent it from falling upon and punishing the sinner." Upon the same subject Richard of St. Laurence says that "God, before the birth of Mary, complained by the mouth of the Prophet Ezechiel that there was no one to rise up and withhold Him from

chastising sinners, for this office was reserved for our Blessed Lady, who withholds His arm until He is pacified.

II.

The Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget "that there is no sinner in the world, however much he may be at enmity with God, who does not return to Him and recover His grace, if he has recourse to her and asks her assistance." The same St. Bridget one day heard Jesus Christ address His Mother, and say that "she would be ready to obtain the grace of God for Lucifer himself, if he only humbled himself so far as to seek her aid." That proud spirit will never humble himself so far as to implore the protection of Mary; but if such a thing were possible, Mary would be sufficiently compassionate, and her prayers would have sufficient power to obtain both forgiveness and salvation for him from God. But that which cannot be verified with regard to the devil is verified in the case of sinners who have recourse to this compassionate Mother.

Noe's Ark was a true figure of Mary; for as in it all kinds of beasts were saved, so under the mantle of Mary all sinners, who by their vices and sensuality are already like beasts, find refuge; but with this difference, as a pious author remarks, that "while the brutes that entered the ark remained brutes, the wolf remaining a wolf, and a tiger a tiger—under the mantle of Mary, on the other hand, the wolf becomes a lamb, and the tiger a dove." One day St. Gertrude saw Mary with her mantle open, and under it there were many wild beasts of different kinds—leopards, lions, and bears; and she saw not only that our Blessed Lady did not drive them away, but that she welcomed and caressed them with her benign hand. The Saint understood that these wild beasts were miserable sinners, who are welcomed by Mary with sweetness and love the moment they have recourse to her.

It was, then, not without reason that St. Bernard addressed the Blessed Virgin, saying: "Thou, O Lady, dost not reject any sinner who approaches thee, however

loathsome and repugnant he may be. If he asks thy assistance, thou dost not disdain to extend thy compassionate hand to him, to extricate him from the gulf of despair." May our God be eternally blessed and thanked, O most amiable Mary, for having created thee so sweet and benign, even towards the most miserable sinners! Truly unfortunate is he who loves thee not, and who, having it in his power to obtain thy assistance, has no confidence in thee. He who has not recourse to thee is lost; but who was ever lost that had recourse to thee, O most Blessed Virgin?

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

To begin with the holy missions: it would be difficult to express the ardent zeal with which Alphonsus laboured in this holy work. The charity of Christ so pressed this apostolic man, that in the whole kingdom of Naples but few provinces could be found which had not experienced the effects of his burning zeal. We should have to write many volumes if we wished to enumerate all the conversions that took place in the various regions he visited. A more perfect missionary than Alphonsus cannot be imagined. He aroused the admiration of the people by the marvellous power of his eloquence, but especially by the bright light of those apostolic virtues which made him, as it were, a mirror of sanctity. So great was his humility that, when journeying on the missions, his dress was no better than that of a ragged pauper. Thus it happened that on one occasion, before he had founded his Congregation, when giving a mission, in company with other priests, he entered a certain village dressed in a miserable cassock and riding on an ass, whilst the other missionaries were travelling in a carriage. The inhabitants, seeing his wretched costume,

took him for the cook; and when they heard him preach in the evening they could not contain their astonishment and exclaimed: "If the cook is such a preacher, what will it be when the others begin?" The mortification of the servant of God was not less remarkable than his humility. He ate nothing but common food, and that most sparingly, and often it was only a little soup, and even that he seasoned with bitter herbs. On the missions, as well as at home, he used frequently to take the discipline, scourging himself cruelly, even to blood. To this was added the use of pointed chains, which he would fasten on so tightly that more than once he fell to the ground half dead, and almost incapable of movement; and thus at no moment of his life was he free from suffering.

A life of such austere holiness produced marvellous fruits in the salvation of souls. The words that flowed from the lips of the servant of God possessed so Divine an unction that they effected innumerable conversions. Not only individuals, but whole cities were converted, and the vices of Babylon disappeared to give place to the virtues of Paradise. Amongst his hearers there were none who could resist his eloquent appeals; all had to yield to the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke. The numerous sinners who came to him for confession were all converted to a better life. And Alphonsus himself owned that, even if he had to defer absolution in the case of certain sinners, these penitents had always returned to him in a state fit for absolution, so that no one was ever finally dismissed by him without having been sincerely converted to Almighty God.

In order to give greater efficacy to the words and actions of the Saint, God willed to ratify his ministry by miraculous favours. Chief of these were the extraordinary graces bestowed on him by his beloved Queen, the Blessed Virgin Mary. At Foggia, in Apulia, when he was preaching a Novena in her honour, for the space of a whole hour he was seen in ecstasy before one of her pictures. The Holy Virgin, as he himself declared, appeared to him under the form of a young maiden of

thirteen or fourteen years of age. She wore a white veil, and seemed to be inclining her head, now to the right and now to the left. In regarding this apparition he said that he felt great devotion and spiritual joy and could not restrain his tears. The same prodigy was repeated at Foggia, and in the proper office granted in memory of it by the Apostolic See, it is described as follows: "When this fervent lover of the Mother of God was proclaiming in glowing accents the praises of the Blessed Virgin in front of one of her altars, to which the people had given the name of the altar of the *Ancient Picture,* a ray of splendour fell upon him from this picture, lighting up his whole countenance, whilst he was rapt in ecstasy in presence of all the people." At the same time he was raised three feet in the air, to the great joy and consolation of the assembled faithful. Alphonsus was rewarded with a similar apparition both in the town of Amalfi and in the hamlet of St. George. He was endowed, too, with the gift of prophecy, by which he both predicted coming events and announced what was taking place at a distance. He had also the power of seeing into the inmost recesses of the heart, and would often reveal to sinners their most hidden crimes. Amongst the graces bestowed upon him was that of healing, and also of bilocation, by which he was seen more than once in two places at the same time.

But whilst he was giving himself up with such unwearied zeal to the labours of the apostolic ministry, and was gaining innumerable souls to Christ by word and example and by the splendour of his miracles, the holy founder by no means neglected the grave obligations imposed upon him by the care of his young Institute, The members of his Congregation had been gradually increasing in numbers, until, in 1746, the Institute possessed four houses, namely, at Nocera, Ciorani, Iliceto, and Caposele. Of these, Iliceto and Caposele had been founded after the death of Bishop Falcoja, in the spring of 1743. The house at Scala had been given up in 1738, on account of the vexatious opposition which had been raised against it. Alphonsus

considered that the time had now arrived for placing his Institute on a firm footing, and so all his energies were directed to obtain approbation for it from the Supreme Pontiff, and from the King of Naples. From the civil power, indeed, nothing could be gained but promises, but at Rome his efforts were more successful. The Chair of St. Peter was then occupied by Benedict XIV, and to him, in the year 1748, Alphonsus addressed a supplication, begging that the Pontiff would deign to confirm the new Institute by his authority. In order to ensure success, he sent one of the members of his Congregation to Rome to direct the negotiations in person, and to bring matters to a favourable conclusion. The petition of Alphonsus was graciously received, and although an affair of this kind is generally beset with numerous difficulties, nevertheless, owing to the prayers and mortifications of Alphonsus, it had a speedy and unlooked-for termination. On the 25th of February of the following year a Pontifical decree was issued, which not only approved the rules, but also confirmed the Institute itself by a solemn approbation. When this happy news reached the Saint he fell upon his knees, and, with eyes streaming with tears of joy, he poured forth heartfelt thanks to God for so great a blessing. Then, having summoned the whole community into the Church, he intoned the hymn "Te Deum Laudamus"; and after this had been sung he addressed to God the words of David: *O God of hosts, visit this vineyard, and perfect the same, which thy right hand hath planted.* Then, commenting on these words, he exhorted his children to show themselves worthy of the great grace which God had bestowed upon them, by observing with scrupulous exactitude all the rules of the Institute, and by ever cherishing feelings of gratitude to Jesus and Mary. The name of the Congregation was changed from that of the Most Holy Saviour to that of the Most Holy Redeemer; and as the nuns of Scala presented their rules also for approbation about the same time, Benedict XIV. approved them, with the same title of the Most Holy Redeemer, on the 8th June, 1750.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

When the Divine Word offered Himself to redeem mankind, there were before Him two ways of redeeming the world, the one of joy and glory, the other of pains and insults. But as it was His will, not only by His coming to deliver man from eternal death, but also to call forth the love of all the hearts of men, He rejected the way of joy and glory, and chose that of pains and insults: *Having joy set before him, he endured the cross*—(Heb. xii. 2). In order that He might satisfy the Divine justice for us, and, at the same time, inflame us with His holy love, He was willing to endure the burden of all our sins; that, dying upon a Cross, He might obtain for us grace and the life of the Blessed. This is what Isaias intended to express when he said: *He himself hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows*—(Is. liii. 4).

Of this there were two express figures in the Old Testament; the first was the annual ceremony of the scape-goat, and the high priest presented as bearing all the sins of the people, and therefore all, loading it with curses, drove it into the desert, to be the object of the wrath of God. This scape-goat was a figure of our Redeemer, Who was willing to load Himself with all the curses deserved by us for our sins; being made a curse for us, in order that He might obtain for us the Divine blessing. Therefore the Apostle wrote in another place: *He made him to be sin for us, who knew not sin, that we might be made the justice of God in him*—(2 Cor. v. 21). That is, as St. Ambrose and St. Anselm explain it, He made Him to be sin Who was Innocence itself. Jesus presented Himself to His Father as if He

had been sin itself. In a word, Jesus took upon Himself the character of a sinner, and endured the pains due to us sinners, in order to render us just before God. The second type of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ offered to the Eternal Father for us upon the Cross was that brazen serpent fixed to a tree, by looking upon which the Jews who were bitten by fiery serpents were healed—(Num. xxi. 8). Accordingly, St. John writes : *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that every one who believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life*—(Jo. iii. 14).

II.

We must here notice that in the Book of Wisdom, the shameful death of Jesus Christ is clearly foretold. Although the words of the passage referred to may apply to the death of every just man, yet, say Tertullian, St. Cyprian, St. Jerome, and many other holy Fathers, that they principally refer to the death of Christ. We read : *If he is the true Son of God, he will accept him, and deliver him*—(Wis. ii. 18). These words exactly correspond with what the Jews said when Jesus was upon the Cross : *He trusted in God ; let him deliver him, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God*—(Matt. xxvii. 43). The wise Man goes on to say, *Let us try him with insults and torments* (that is, those of the Cross), *and let us prove his patience ; let us condemn him to the most shameful death*—(Wis. ii. 19, 20). The Jews chose the death of the Cross for Jesus Christ, because it is shameful, in order that His Name might be forever infamous, and no more held in remembrance, according to the other text of Jeremias : *Let us cast wood into his bread, and wipe him out from the land of the living, and his name shall be remembered no more*—(Jer. xi. 19). How, then, can the Jews of the present day say that it is false that Christ, because His life was ended by a shameful death, was the promised Messias, when the Prophets themselves foretold that He would die a most dishonourable death ?

And Jesus accepted such a death. He died to pay the

price of our sins; and therefore, as a sinner, He desired to be circumcised; to be redeemed with a price when He was presented in the Temple; to receive the baptism of repentance from the Baptist; and lastly, in His Passion, to be nailed upon the Cross to atone for our guilty wanderings; to atone for our avarice by being stripped of His garments; for our pride, by the insults He endured; for our desires of power, by submitting himself to the executioner; for our evil thoughts, by His crown of thorns; for our intemperance, by the gall He tasted; and by the pangs of His body for our sensual delights.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"PATIENCE HATH A PERFECT WORK."

How is it possible for him who looks at the Crucifix, and beholds a God dying in a sea of sorrows and insults —how is it possible for him, if he loves that God, not to suffer with cheerfulness? Yea, how is it even possible not to desire to suffer every pain for Jesus' sake? Love makes all things easy.

I.

O God, how is it possible for him who looks at the Crucifix, and beholds a God dying in a sea of sorrows and insults; how, I say, is it possible for him, if he loves that God, not to suffer with cheerfulness? Yea, how is it even possible not to desire to suffer every pain for

Jesus' sake? St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say: "The sharpest pains become sweet when we behold Jesus on the Cross." Justus Lipsius once found himself greatly afflicted with pains: a certain person endeavoured to encourage him to bear them with patience by placing before him the patience of the stoics; but turning to the Crucifix he said: "There is true patience!" He meant to say that the example of a God Who once suffered so much for the love of us is sufficient to animate us to endure all pain for the love of Him. "The ignominy of the Cross," says St. Bernard, "is agreeable to him who is not ungrateful to a crucified God." To him who loves his crucified Saviour pains and opprobrium are agreeable. When St. Eleazar was asked by his virgin spouse, St. Afra, how he could submit to so many insults from the rabble without seeking revenge, he said: "My spouse, think not that I am insensible to these insults; I feel them keenly; but I turn to Jesus on the Cross, and continue to look at Him until my soul becomes tranquil." Love, says St. Augustine, makes all things easy. After being wounded with Divine love, St. Catherine of Genoa used to say that she knew not what it was to suffer. Although she endured the most grievous pains, she felt none of them, because she regarded them as sent by Him who loved her so tenderly. Thus also a good religious of the Society of Jesus, when God visited him with any pain, sickness, or persecution, used to say within himself: "Tell me, O pain, sickness, or persecution, who sends thee? Does God send thee? Welcome, welcome!" Thus he was always in peace.

II.

Since, therefore, in this life we must suffer either cheerfully or with reluctance, let us endeavour to suffer with merit, that is, with patience. Patience is a shield that defends us against all the pains arising from persecutions, infirmities, losses, and other afflictions. He who has not this shield, has to bear all these pains. Let us, then, in the first place, ask this patience of God;

without asking it we shall never obtain this great gift. When afflictions come upon us, let us be careful to do violence to ourselves, and not break out into words of impatience or complaint. The fire that burns in a vessel is soon extinguished when the vessel is closed. *To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna* —(Apoc. ii. 17). When a person does violence to conquer himself in adversity, by instantly embracing the cross that God sends him, oh! what sweetness does the Lord not make him afterwards experience in the very tribulation he suffers—a sweetness wholly hidden from men of the world, but well known to souls that love God. St. Augustine used to say that to enjoy a good conscience in the midst of afflictions is sweeter than to live with a guilty conscience in the midst of delights. Speaking of herself, St. Teresa said: "I have several times experienced that when I generously resolve to do an act, God instantly makes the performance of it pleasant to me. He wishes the soul to feel these terrors in the beginning, that she may have greater merit."

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

When once his Congregation was approved, Alphonsus gave himself up with greater ardour than ever to the impulses of his burning zeal. From this time we see him extending so widely the sphere of his labours, that his boundless activity has won for him the admiration of all successive ages. In addition to the cares, which now weighed upon him more heavily than ever owing to the increase and extension of his Institute; in addition to the anxieties and fatigues occasioned by his persevering assiduity in the work of the missions, Alphonsus now began to publish that long series of

works, both theological and ascetical, by which he merited the glorious title of Doctor of the Church. His fame rests principally on his Moral Theology, and as a teacher of morals he occupies indisputably the foremost place. It was the charity of Christ and zeal for souls that constantly urged on this holy man. Hence no amount of work, no pains of sickness, however severe, could hinder him from publishing one or another book, and sometimes even many every year, and this he continued to do even when burdened by the heavy cares of his episcopal office.

If we look for an explanation of this marvellous activity we shall find it in the heroic vow by which this extraordinary man bound himself for the love of Jesus. This vow is recorded in the Bull of his Canonization in the following terms :—" In order that he might consecrate himself and all his actions to the service of God, he bound himself by an arduous and almost unheard-of vow, never to waste the smallest portion of his time in idleness, but to be perpetually engaged in some useful occupation." Certainly we cannot but wonder that anyone should venture to make a promise so unlimited. It occasioned the defender of the cause of his beatification to exclaim in astonishment : " O wondrous vow, to which eternal praises are due ; O heroic act, unknown till now, that reveals to us the sanctity of Alphonsus !" It is very probable indeed that Alphonsus took this vow from the very commencement of his Congregation. But since he lived for more than fifty years from that time, what must have been the vigilance necessary to observe so heroic a resolution for so long a period ?

And now before we proceed further in our narration of the Saint's life, we will delay for a few moments in order to speak of the virtues which he practised in so perfect a manner. As we mentioned before, the chief virtue of St. Alphonsus was his burning love for Jesus Christ. This virtue was, as it were, the root from which sprung all his other virtues ; it was the motive power of all his actions. Since he was pressed by the charity of Christ, he fled even from the shadow of sin as from the

face of a serpent. "Rather," he used to say, "would I be plunged alive into a cauldron of boiling oil than commit even one mortal sin; and I would suffer my head to be cut off sooner than tell a wilful lie." The words and actions of Jesus Christ formed the unceasing subject of his contemplation. Yet there were three Mysteries of this Divine life that he loved to dwell upon with a special affection: the Incarnation of the Divine Word; His Passion and Death; and that immense love which moved Him to become a sojourner on our altars, even to the end of time. In meditating on these Mysteries he nourished his soul with a food of heavenly sweetness; they formed the usual subjects of his sermons, and he explained them with such unction that he seemed to be an angel rather than a man. In order to communicate to others the piety that inflamed his own heart, he published many books, written in a strain that is truly seraphic. Amongst these the best known is that golden little work entitled *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*. When Alphonsus thought of the number of souls who offend our Divine Lord by their sins, and who either treat Him with complete indifference, or with cold respect, he would exclaim, in bitter grief: "Poor Jesus Christ! poor Jesus Christ!" And it was this compassion for his outraged Saviour that urged him to undertake so many labours for the salvation of souls.

There was, perhaps, no Saint who more fully understood, or more constantly insisted on that urgent command of our Lord Jesus Christ "that we ought always to pray and not to faint." Alphonsus himself used to pray to God without ceasing, and he never wearied of exhorting the faithful to make use of the weapon of prayer in all dangers both of soul and body. He published on this subject his celebrated treatise, entitled: *Prayer, the Great Means of Salvation;* and, hence, he has been styled the Apostle of Prayer. From this unwearied spirit of prayer, and from his singular love for Jesus, there sprung his boundless and truly extraordinary devotion to the Virgin Mother of God. It would, indeed, be difficult to describe the greatness of

his love for this best of mothers. During the whole course of his life he had nothing more at heart than to prepare himself for her Feasts by redoubling his prayers and penances. Every Saturday he fasted on bread and water in honour of his beloved Mother. His actions were all commenced and ended with the "Hail Mary." No day was allowed to pass by without the recitation of a third part of the Rosary, to which he bound himself by vow. He had also made a vow to preach every Saturday in honour of the Blessed Virgin. When he spoke of his dearly-beloved Queen, it was evident that his burning words proceeded from a heart burning with love. And since these marks of affection for the Holy Virgin seemed insufficient to him, he wrote a book on the *Glories of Mary,* of which every page, nay, every line, breathes the tenderest devotion and love. As the Bull of his Canonization declares: "Towards the Blessed Virgin, whom he regarded as a Mother, he cherished the most singular devotion." Such was Alphonsus, whom Jesus Christ gave to His Church as founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. The Saint had now reached his sixty-sixth year, and it is at this period of his life that he received a call from Heaven to new cares and duties, namely, those of the episcopal office. Alphonsus as a bishop will be the subject of our next chapter.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Therefore, we ought continually with tears of tenderness, to thank the Eternal Father for having given His innocent Son to death, to deliver us from eternal death: *He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; and how hath he not also with him given us all*

things?—(Rom. viii. 32). Thus wrote St. Paul; and thus Jesus Himself spoke in the Gospel of St. John: *God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son*—(Jo. iii. 16). On this account the Holy Church exclaims on Holy Saturday: "Oh, wonderful the condescension of Thy love for us! O inestimable gift of Charity, that to redeem a servant Thou shouldst give Thy Son." O infinite mercy, O infinite love of our God! O holy Faith! How can he who believes and confesses this, live without burning with holy love for a God Who is so loving, and so worthy of love?

O Eternal God, look not upon my soul overwhelmed with sins; look upon Thy innocent Son hanging upon a Cross, Who offers Thee the many pangs and insults He has suffered, that Thou mayest have mercy upon me. O God most worthy of love, and my true Lover, for the love of this Thy Son, so beloved by Thee, have mercy upon me. The mercy I ask is, that Thou shouldst give me Thy holy love. Oh, draw me wholly to Thyself, from the mire of my corruption. Burn up, O Thou consuming Fire, all Thou seest impure in my soul, and all that hinders me from being wholly Thine.

II.

Let us give thanks to the Father, and let us give equal thanks to the Son, that He has been willing to take upon Himself our flesh, and together with it our sins, to offer to God, by His Passion, a worthy satisfaction. It is on this account that the Apostle says that Jesus Christ has become our Mediator; that is, that He has bound Himself to pay our debts: *Jesus is made the surety of a better testament*—(Heb. vii. 22). As the Mediator between God and man, He has established a covenant with God, by which He has bound Himself to satisfy Divine justice for us; and, on the other hand, has promised us eternal life on the part of God. Therefore, in anticipation of this, we are warned not to forget the grace of this Divine surety, Who, to obtain salvation for us, has been willing to sacrifice His life. *Forget not the kindness of thy surety, for he hath given his life for*

thee—(Ecclus. xxix. 19). It is to give us the better assurance of pardon, says St. Paul, that Jesus Christ with His Blood has blotted out the decree of our condemnation, in which the sentence of eternal death stands written against us, and nailed it to the Cross on which He died to satisfy the Divine justice for us—(Col. ii. 14).

O my Jesus, by that love which caused Thee to give Thy Blood and Thy life upon Calvary for me, make me die to all the affections of this world; make me forget everything, that I may think only of loving Thee and giving Thee pleasure! O my God, worthy of infinite love, Thou hast loved me without reserve, I desire to love Thee also without reserve. I love Thee, my greatest Good; I love Thee, O my Love, my All!

Monday—Tenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

"*PATIENCE HATH A PERFECT WORK.*"

He who resolves to suffer for God, suffers no more pain. St. Gertrude used to say that so great was her enjoyment in suffering that no time was more painful to her than that in which she was free from pain. Ah yes, souls who understand the language of love, know well how to find all their happiness in suffering.

I.

He who resolves to suffer for God, suffers no more pain. Let us read the Lives of the Saints, and we shall see how they were enamoured of suffering.

St. Gertrude used to say that so great was her enjoyment in suffering that no time was more painful than that in which she was free from pain. St. Teresa used to say that she did not wish to live without suffering; hence she would often exclaim : " Either to suffer or to die !" St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi went so far as to say : " To suffer and not to die !"

When the tyrant was preparing new torments for the Martyr Procopius, the Saint said to him : " Torment me as much as you please; but do you not know that to him who loves Jesus Christ there is nothing more dear than to suffer for Jesus Christ."

St. Gordian, as St. Basil relates, being threatened with great torments if he refused to deny Jesus Christ, answered : " I am sorry that I can die but once for my Saviour Jesus Christ."

To the tyrant who threatened to cast her into a caldron of boiling pitch, St. Potamiena, Virgin, said : " I entreat you to let me down into this caldron, not at once, but by degrees, that thus I may suffer more for my Jesus." The tyrant complied with her request; and she was let down gradually into the caldron, till the pitch having reached her neck took away her speech and her life.

Baronius describes the Martyrdom of three holy Virgins, called Faith, Hope, and Charity, who when threatened with torments by the tyrant Antiochus courageously said : " Do you not know that to Christians nothing is more desirable than to suffer for Jesus Christ?" St. Faith was first scourged; her breasts were then cut off, she was afterwards tormented with fire, and finally beheaded. St. Hope was first beaten with the sinews of an ox; her ribs were then torn with iron combs, and she was afterwards thrown into a vessel of burning pitch. St. Charity, the youngest, was not more than nine years old, and hence the tyrant expected that she would yield through fear of torments. He said to her : " My child, be you at least wise, unless you wish to be tortured like your sisters." The holy child answered : " You deceive yourself, O Antiochus;

all your torments shall not make me forsake Jesus Christ." The tyrant ordered her to be fastened to a rope, and to be cast several times from a height to the ground, until all her bones were dislocated. He then commanded her members to be pierced with sharp irons, so that she died exhausted of blood.

O my God, if I have not hitherto loved Thee, I now give myself entirely to Thee. I wish to renounce all things to love only Thee, my Saviour, Who art worthy of infinite love. I have sinned enough against Thee. The remainder of my life I wish to spend in loving Thy Heart, which is so enamoured of me. Tell me all Thou willest. I wish to do it. Give me strength to execute Thy will. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness, I love Thee with my whole heart; and for Thy sake I accept all the pains Thou shalt be pleased to send me.

Mary, my Mother, assist me by thy intercession; in thee I trust.

II.

In Japan a certain married woman called Maxentia was subjected to torments for the Faith. One of the executioners wished to alleviate her pains, but she rejected the offer. Seeing her continue firm in confessing the Faith, one of her persecutors pointed a sword twice to her cheek in order to terrify her; but she said to him: "O God, how do you expect to terrify me with that death which I desire? The way to fill me with terror is to promise me life." After these words she exposed her neck to the executioner, and suffered Martyrdom.

In Japan, also, Father John Baptist Maciado, of the Society of Jesus, was confined in a damp prison, in which he remained for forty days in such intense pain that he could not rest by night or by day. From this prison he wrote to another Religious: "My Father, notwithstanding all my pains, I would not exchange my condition for that of the first monarch of the earth."

From a prison in which he had a great deal to suffer Father Charles Spinola wrote to his companions: "Oh! how sweet is it to suffer for Jesus Christ! I have

received the news of my condemnation. I pray you to thank the Divine goodness for the great gift bestowed upon me." In the same letter he added: "Charles Spinola condemned for Jesus Christ." Soon after he was burnt alive on a slow fire. It is said that, in thanksgiving to God, when he was fastened to the stake he intoned the Psalm—*Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes*: *O praise the Lord, all ye nations*—(Ps. cxvi.). Thus he died.

But how, some one may ask with wonder, were the holy Martyrs able to suffer with so much joy? Were they not flesh? Or did the Lord make them insensible to pain? No, says St. Bernard, their patience and jubilation under such terrible sufferings were the effect not of insensibility, but of the love they bore to Jesus Christ. They were not exempt from pain, but through love for their Lord they conquered and despised it. That great servant of God, Father Hippolitus Durazzo, of the Society of Jesus, used to say: "Let God cost what He will, the price is never too great." And St. Joseph Calasanctius said that he who knows not how to suffer for Jesus Christ knows not how to gain Jesus Christ. Ah! souls that understand the language of love, being convinced that by embracing crosses they please God, know well how to find all their happiness in suffering.

My crucified Jesus, Thou hast suffered so many sorrows and insults for my sake; Thou hast died in order to gain my love, and I have so often renounced Thy love for nothing. Have mercy on me and pardon me. Blessed be Thy mercy which has borne with me so long and with so much patience. During that time I neither loved Thee nor cared to be loved by Thee. I now love Thee with my whole soul; and the greatest of all my pains is that which arises from having offended Thee Who has loved me so tenderly. Yes, this is my greatest pain. But it is a pain that consoles me, because it gives me confidence that Thou hast already pardoned me. Oh, that I had died rather than have ever offended Thee!

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

One day, when Alphonsus was conversing with a bishop with whom he was very intimate, he remarked that one of the greatest graces he had ever received was that of having escaped the peril of being a bishop : " a peril," he added, " that I should have had some difficulty in avoiding, had I remained with my family." Strange to relate, almost at the same moment, when the holy man was congratulating himself on his happy escape from this perilous dignity, steps were being taken both at Naples and at Rome for imposing this burden upon him. Very shortly after the conversation above related, a courier from Naples arrived at Nocera, bearing letters for Alphonsus from the Apostolic Nuncio, announcing his electi n by the Sovereign Pontiff to the Bishopric of St. Agatha of the Goths, which had lately become vacant. On reading the letters Alphonsus was thunderstruck, and could not speak. The news spread quickly through the house; his sons hastened to his room and found him silent, agitated, and bathed in tears. Soon, however, he became calm, feeling sure that his refusal would end the matter, and that his election was merely a mark of esteem which the Pope wished to confer upon him. The others were of the same opinion. " Do not be troubled," said Father Ferrara, " the refusal of such dignities is readily accepted." Alphonsus remembered, too, how his simple refusal of the archbishopric of Palermo had been sufficient to prevent any further importunities.

His mind being now more at ease he wrote off at once to Rome, to thank the Sovereign Pontiff for his gracious intentions, but at the same time to excuse himself from accepting the episcopal dignity. He enlarged upon his own incapacity, his great age, his habitual infirmities,

the vow he had made never to accept any dignity, and the scandal his acceptance would give to the members of the Congregation. When the messenger had gone, he turned round to those of his sons who were present, and said : " This storm has cost me an hour and four ducats. I would not exchange my Congregation for all the kingdoms of the world." In order the more surely to avert this dreadful burden, Alphonsus multiplied his accustomed prayers and mortifications; and not content with his own fasts, disciplines, and vigils, he implored the intercession of the members of his Congregation, and of many pious souls whose prayers he knew were acceptable to Jesus Christ and His Virgin Mother. At the same time he wrote to various persons in authority begging them to use their influence in his behalf. In one word, he left nothing untried to allay what he called this terrible tempest. But the tempest could not be allayed, and soon letters arrived from Rome confirming in the most absolute manner the election of Alphonsus.

Everyone was well aware of the shock which this news would cause the venerable old man, and therefore two of the members of his Congregation undertook the unwelcome office of conveying to him the decision of the Pontiff. They entered the room of Alphonsus, and begged him to kneel and say a " Hail Mary." Having recited it, he enquired in an agitated manner whether the messenger had arrived. " Yes," said the Father, " and the Sovereign Pontiff commands you to undertake the episcopal office." At these words he was silent, and then, having raised his eyes to Heaven, he bent his head in token of submission, exclaiming : " I have nothing to reply, since it is Thou, Lord, Who hast done this. Yes, Lord, I am dumb, because Thou hast done it." Then, after a moment's recollection, he added, with tears : " It is the will of God. He drives me out of the Congregation for my sins. Do not forget me, my brothers, do not forget me. Must we then separate after having loved each other so tenderly for thirty years?" Having said this, he became speechless from grief, whilst torrents of tears flowed from his eyes. The

Fathers tried to console him by saying that some of his friends would yet succeed in inducing the Pope to accept his renunciation. "No," said Alphonsus, "the Pontiff's words admit of no interpretation. He has declared his will in a manner that demands obedience. I must obey."

Alphonsus did, in fact, obey, but the effort which it cost him was so great as almost to cause his death. He was seized with a violent fever, and soon it was reported both at Naples and at Rome, that he was actually dead. But God restored him to health; and as soon as he felt himself convalescent, he determined to set out at once for Rome. On his arrival there he found that the Pope was then absent from the Eternal City, so he determined to visit Loretto. After he had satisfied his devotion to the Incarnate Word and His Virgin Mother at this sacred shrine, he returned to Rome, and was consecrated Bishop in the Church of the Minerva. Then having received the Apostolic Benediction from Clement XIII, he set out with all haste for his diocese, where he was received with joy by his new flock, as a pastor and father sent to them by God Himself. These events took place in the year 1762.

Having now taken possession of his diocese, he applied himself to fulfil as perfectly as possible, the various duties of his high office. From the very commencement it was easy to see that his flock would find in him a model of all virtues, and that in his life and actions would be realised the idea of a true bishop. During the thirteen years in which he occupied the See of St. Agatha his energies were specially directed to three objects: his own diocese, his Congregation, and the Universal Church. He spared no labours in his attempts to sanctify the first; of the second he still retained the government, with the assistance of a vicar-general; and the third was always the object of his pious solicitude. We will now say a few words on these points.

To begin with his pastoral duties, the first thought of the holy bishop was the proper regulation of his own

household. The following is the rule of life which he marked out for himself. As soon as he had risen he gave himself the discipline, and this penitential exercise was followed by meditation, which he made in common with the members of his household. Then he recited the "Little Hours," and after a long preparation celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, and heard another Mass afterwards as thanksgiving. He next gave audience to all who desired it, but was careful not to allow any useless conversations. If any spare time was left him, he employed it in prayer or study. After dinner he took the usual repose, although it was a very short one. He then returned to the studies which he had interrupted, or applied himself to the transaction of necessary business, or to prayer, and thus remained occupied until a late hour of the night. He assisted every evening at the visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the church. Everything in his palace was of the plainest and simplest kind. All that savoured of luxury was so rigidly excluded from his table that it would be difficult to imagine a more austere mode of life. He had as few servants as possible, and over those he watched with the greatest vigilance. They were forbidden to enter a tavern, or to indulge in gaming. Every day they had to be present at the Holy Mass, and twice a month approach the Sacraments, for he wished that their lives should be irreproachable, and give edification to all.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

In a word, whatever blessing, whatever salvation, whatever hope we have, we have it all in Jesus Christ, and in His merits; as St. Peter says: *Neither is there*

salvation in any other. For there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved—(Acts iv. 12). Thus there is no hope of salvation for us except through the merits of Jesus Christ; from which St. Thomas and all the Theologians conclude that, since the promulgation of the Gospel, we are bound to believe explicitly, of necessity, not only by precept, but by the necessity of the truth, that it is only through the merits of our Redeemer that we can be saved.

All the foundation, then, of our salvation consists in the Redemption of man wrought out by the Divine Word upon earth. We must, therefore, reflect that although the actions of Jesus Christ upon earth, being the acts of a Divine person, were of an infinite merit, so that the least of them was enough to satisfy the Divine justice for all the sins of men, yet nevertheless the death of Jesus Christ is the great sacrifice by which our Redemption was completed; so that, in the holy Scriptures, the Redemption of man is attributed chiefly to the death suffered by Jesus upon the Cross: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*—(Phil. ii. 8). Wherefore the Apostle writes, that in receiving the Holy Eucharist, we ought to remember the Lord's death: *As often as ye shall eat this bread and drink this chalice, ye shall show the Lord's death until he come*—(1 Cor. xi. 26). But why does he mention the death of the Lord, and not His Incarnation, Birth, or Resurrection? He speaks of His death because this was the suffering of the greatest pain and greatest shame that Jesus Christ endured. And that completed our Redemption.

II.

Hence St. Paul says: *For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*—(1 Cor. ii. 2). The Apostle well knew that Jesus Christ was born in a cave; that, for thirty years, He inhabited a carpenter's shop; that He had risen from the dead, and had ascended into Heaven. Why,

then, did he say that he would know nothing but Jesus Jesus Crucified? Because the death suffered by Jesus Christ on the Cross was that which most moved him to love Him, and induced him to exercise obedience towards God and love towards his neighbour, which were the virtues most specially inculcated by Jesus Christ from the pulpit of His Cross. St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, writes: "In whatever temptation we fall, in the Cross is our protection; there is obedience to God, love for our neighbour, patience in adversity." Whence St. Augustine says: "The Cross was not only the instrument of death to the Sufferer, but His chair of teaching."

O devout souls, let us labour to imitate the Spouse of the Canticles, who said: *I sat down under his shadow whom I desired*—(Cant. ii. 3). Let us, then, place often before our eyes, especially on Fridays, Jesus dying on the Cross; and let us rest there for a while and contemplate with tender affection His sufferings, and the love He bore to us, while He continued in agony upon that bed of pain. Let us also say: *I have sat under the shadow of him whom I desired.* Oh, how sweet is the repose that is found by souls who love God in the midst of the tumult of this world, and in the temptations of hell, and even in fears of the Divine justice, when they contemplate in solitude and silence our loving Redeemer as He hangs in agony upon the Cross, His Divine Blood flowing forth in drops from all His limbs, stricken and laid open with stripes, and thorns, and nails! Oh, how the desires of worldly honours, of earthly riches, of sensual pleasures, depart from our minds at the sight of Jesus crucified! Then does there breathe from that Cross a heavenly unction which sweetly detaches us from earthly things, and lights up in us a holy desire to suffer and die for love of Him Who has been willing to suffer and die for love of us.

Tuesday—Tenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DOING GOD'S WILL, YOUR SANCTIFICATION.

St. John Chrysostom says that all the perfection of the Love of God consists in resignation to the Divine will. He who conforms himself to the Divine Will is a man according to God's own Heart. *I have found David . . . a man according to my own heart who will do all my wills.*

I.

St. John Chrysostom says that all the perfection of the love of God consists in resignation to the Divine will. As hatred divides the wills of enemies, so love unites the wills of lovers, so that each wishes only what the other desires. "True friendship consists in wishing and not wishing the same thing," says St. Jerome. Hence the Wise Man says: *They that are faithful in love shall rest in him*—(Wis. iii. 9). Souls that are faithful in loving God acquiesce in all that He wills.

Since nothing is more dear to us than our will, the sacrifice of it is the most acceptable offering we can present to the Lord. This is the sacrifice God Himself continually asks of us with so much earnestness: *My son, give me thy heart*—(Prov. xxiii. 26). Son, give me your heart, that is, your will. Nothing else that we offer to God can content Him as long as we reserve our will. If you had two servants, one of whom laboured continually, but always according to his own will; the other performed less work, but was obedient to all your directions, you would certainly entertain a greater

regard for the latter, and little or no esteem for the former. Oh, how often do we deceive ourselves by desiring to engage in certain undertakings in order to please ourselves without seeing that they are not conformable to the Divine will. How often do we act through self-love, saying: But what I wish to do is conducive to the glory of God. But let us be persuaded that the greatest glory that we can give God is to conform ourselves to His Divine will. Blessed Henry Suso used to say: "God is not so much glorified when we abound in lights and spiritual consolations as when we submit to the Divine will and pleasure." Hence Blessed Stephana of Soncino saw among the Seraphim certain souls whom she had known on earth; and she learned by revelation that they had attained that sublime elevation by the perfect union of their will in this life with the will of God.

II.

All the malice of sin consists in wishing what God does not will; for then, says St. Anselm, we in a certain manner endeavour to rob God of His crown. He who wishes to follow his own will against the will of God takes, as it were forcibly, from God His crown; for as the crown belongs only to the sovereign, so to do his own will, without dependence on others, belongs to God alone. Samuel said to Saul that to refuse to conform to the Divine will is a species of idolatry. *It is like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey*—(1 Kings xv. 23). It is called *idolatry* because, in refusing to conform to the Divine will, man, instead of adoring the will of God, adores his own will. Now, since all the malice of a creature consists in contradicting the Creator, so all the goodness of the creature consists in a union with the will of the Creator. He who conforms himself to the Divine will becomes, as the Lord said of David, a man according to God's own Heart. *I have found David . . . a man according to my own heart, and who shall do all my wills*—(Acts xiii. 22). The Lord also says: a soul that is conformed to my will shall have for her name *My will. Thou shalt be called My pleasure in her*

—(Is. lxii. 4). Yes, for in this happy soul, because self-will is dead, only the will of God lives.

Ah! happy the soul that can always say with the sacred Spouse: *My soul melted when he spoke*—(Cant. v. 6). My soul melted as soon as my Beloved spoke. Why does she say *melted*? Because, what is rendered liquid no longer retains it own shape, but takes the form of the vessel in which it is contained. Thus loving souls do not retain their own wills, but conform them to whatever their Beloved wills. This conformity implies a will docile and pliant in all things pleasing to God, compared with the obdurate will that resists the Divine will. An instrument is said to be a good one when it is obedient to the person that employs it; if it refuse to obey, of what use is it? For example, were a brush to resist the hand of the painter—if, when drawn to the right it should turn to the left; if, when drawn downwards, it should seek to move upwards—what would the painter do? Would he not instantly cast it into the fire?

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

It must not, however, be imagined that the minute care which he bestowed upon his own household hindered him from attending to the diocese at large. He allowed only a few days to go by before he opened a mission for his people in the cathedral, and this had an immense success. He then proceeded to visit every part of his diocese, making provision everywhere for the sanctification of the flock which had been entrusted to him. This first pastoral visitation of Alphonsus, and, indeed, each succeeding one, may be compared to those holy journeys which Christ and His Apostles used to make throughout the towns and country-places of

Judea. This admirable pastor used generally to spend eight days in each parish, and he arranged that a mission should be given to the people during the time of his visitation, and he would then himself deliver many of the discourses. The aim of all his sermons was to inspire his flock with an intense horror of sin, and for the occasions of sin, to urge them to frequent the Sacraments, and to be persevering in prayer, to enkindle in their hearts a filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and an ardent love for Jesus Christ. The loving solicitude of the holy bishop embraced all classes. He would frequently assemble the children in the church in order to test their knowledge of Christian doctrine, and to teach them all that was necessary to enable them to save their souls. The young men were exhorted to join pious confraternities; the young women were inspired by him with a love of virginal modesty. Parents were exhorted by him, in words full of burning zeal, to fulfil the duties of their state. The sick found in him a father who was ever anxious to relieve and console them. He left nothing undone in order to bring back public sinners to the path of virtue, and, if they were incorrigible, he did not shrink from inflicting the severest punishments. No labour, no fatigue, could induce him to relax, even for a moment, this incessant vigilance. Both in public and in private he was always impressing upon his priests the duty of living holy and edifying lives; and if any of them was an occasion of scandal to the faithful, he punished him with uncompromising severity. And since idleness is the root of all evil, he tried his utmost to free the clergy fr m this hateful pest, by establishing everywhere theological conferences, to which everyone was bound to come, and to be fully prepared to take part in the discussions. He was equally anxious about the fervour of the religious communities in his diocese. He made the most careful inquiries about their manner of life, and did all in his power to ensure a strict observance of rule. In one word, Alphonsus, during his visitations, displayed the zeal and vigilance of a true bishop.

It might have been thought that the holy bishop, whilst traversing his diocese, would have relaxed somewhat of the extreme severity of the life which he led when at home. But such was not the case; he practised the same poverty as in his own palace, and made no change in his accustomed prayers and penances. In order to avoid sleeping on a soft bed, he used to take about with him a large sack stuffed with straw, and this he made use of until his confessor compelled him to give it up, on account of his numerous infirmities. And that even in his sleep he might not be free from pain, he put a number of pebbles in this miserable kind of bed, so that it afforded but little relief to his wearied limbs. The humility of Alphonsus was as admirable as his spirit of penance. *Tell ye the daughter of Sion,* said the Prophet, speaking of our Divine Lord, *behold, thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass.* When the holy Bishop was making his visitation, his people witnessed in him a perfect imitation of the meek and lowly Jesus. He had no splendid equipage, no glittering retinue, but came along seated on a hired ass, which was led by a boy, whilst a man walked by his side, supporting him, on account of his age and great weakness. This humble appearance of Alphonsus gained for him the love and admiration of his people, for they saw him coming to them, as the Saint himself smilingly observed, not "in chariots and horses, but in the Name of the Lord."

As soon as he had returned home after visiting his diocese, the holy Bishop applied himself with zeal to carry out the plans he had formed for the sanctification of his flock. He was well aware that if he wished the people to be holy, he must give them holy priests, and so his chief care was to form a pious and learned clergy, and to do this a good seminary was absolutely necessary. "All my hopes of sanctifying my diocese," he used to say, "rest on the seminary; if that is not what I wish it to be, then all my trouble will be of no avail." Those students whom he found to be either unworthy of the priesthood, or unfitted for it, he at once dismissed, and

for those that remained he drew up rules, framed with such admirable wisdom and discretion, that nothing was wanting either for the discipline of the house or for the spiritual welfare of its inmates. He pointed out the abuses which are wont to creep into establishments of this kind, and indicated the means for avoiding them. He made several wise changes in the course of studies, and selected as professors men who were as remarkable for their piety as their learning. He insisted upon a diligent study of philosophy, dogmatic theology, and, above all, moral theology. "We must certainly," he said, "be good dogmaticians, but it is far more important that we should be good moralists. Without a sound knowledge of moral theology, a man can neither be a good confessor nor a good parish priest." All the seminarists were the objects of his special care, but chiefly those who were on the point of being raised to Holy Orders. He was always present in person at the examination of candidates, and never allowed them to receive any Order until he was perfectly satisfied about their science and virtue.

He was not less vigilant with regard to his priests. He insisted on their preaching in an apostolic manner, and condemned with equal severity the two extremes of negligence and affectation. No one was allowed to hear confessions until he had given proofs of his capacity. In bestowing ecclesiastical benefices, the holy prelate acted with the most rigid impartiality, and conferred them only on those whom he considered to be the most worthy, even when there was no care of souls attached to these dignities. He strictly enjoined on all the obligation of residence. All the convents of his diocese were the special objects of his zealous solicitude. He had scarcely been consecrated bishop when he ordered the Exercises of retreat to be given in every convent under his jurisdiction; and these retreats he afterwards established as an annual custom, since he considered them as the most efficacious means for sanctifying souls. "There is no iron," he would say, "however rusty, that would not be purified and softened in so great a

furnace." The nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer were the most favoured of his spiritual daughters; he had brought them into his episcopal city from the mother-house at Scala. He guarded them as the apple of his eye, and was always assisting them by every means in his power. He gave them also admirable rules to aid them in attaining religious perfection, and is justly regarded as their spiritual father and founder. Between these nuns and the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer there exists, indeed, the bond of a common origin and a common love for the same father, although they are not subject to the Superior-General of the Redemptorists, but to the Bishop of their respective dioceses.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

O God, if Jesus Christ had not been what He really was, the Son of God, and true God, our Creator and supreme Lord, but a mere man, who would not be moved to compassion at the sight of a youth of noble blood, innocent and holy, dying through the force of his torments upon a shameful tree, to atone for sins not his own, but those of his enemies themselves, and thus to deliver them from the death which was their due? How, then, is it that the affections of all hearts are not drawn to a God Who died in a sea of insults and pains for the love of His creatures? How can these creatures love anything but God? How can they think of anything but being grateful to Him Who is their so loving Benefactor?

"Oh, if thou knewest the Mystery of the Cross!"

said St. Andrew to the tyrant who sought to induce him to deny Jesus Christ because Jesus had been crucified as a malefactor. "Oh, if thou couldst understand, O tyrant, the love which Jesus Christ hath borne thee, in being willing to die upon the Cross to make satisfaction for thy sins, and to obtain for thee eternal happiness, certainly thou wouldst not labour to persuade me to deny Him; but thou thyself wouldst abandon everything thou hast and hopest for upon this earth, in order to please and satisfy a God Who has so loved thee." What have not so many Saints and holy Martyrs done, who have left all for Jesus Christ! Oh, shame unto us! How many young virgins have renounced the marriage of the great, royal riches, and all earthly delights, and have willingly sacrificed their life to return some recompense of love for that love which was shown to them by their crucified God! How is it, then, that the Passion of Jesus Christ makes so little impression upon so many Christians? It results from this, that they apply themselves so little to consider what Jesus Christ has suffered for love of us.

II.

O my Redeemer, I have been of the number of these ungrateful ones! Thou hast sacrificed Thy life upon a Cross that Thou mightest not see me perish, and have I repeatedly been willing to lose Thee, an infinite Good, by losing Thy grace? At this time the devil would have me believe that it is impossible that I should be saved, by bringing my sins to my remembrance; but the sight of Thee crucified, O my Jesus, assures me that Thou wilt not drive me from Thy face, if I repent of having offended Thee, and desire to love Thee. Yea, I repent, and I desire to love Thee with all my heart. I detest these accursed pleasures which have caused me to lose Thy grace. I love Thee, O Thou Who art infinitely worthy of love, and I desire ever to love Thee; and the memory of my sins will serve to inflame me the more in the love of Thee, Who hast come to seek me when I fled from Thee. No; I desire to be separated from

Thee no more, and never to cease to love Thee, O my Jesus.

O Mary, refuge of sinners, thou who hast so much shared in the sufferings of thy Son in His death, pray to Him, to pardon me, and to give me grace to love Him.

Wednesday—Tenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DOING GOD'S WILL YOUR SANCTIFICATION.

Some place sanctity in works of penance, others in frequent Communion, others in reciting many vocal prayers. But, no; for St. Thomas says that perfection consists not in these things, but in submission to the Divine will. Doing God's will is your sanctification.

I.

Some place sanctity in works of penance, others in frequent Communion, others in reciting many vocal prayers. But, no; for St. Thomas says that perfection consists not in these things, but in submission to the Divine will. "The perfection of the human soul consists in its subjection to God." Works of penance, prayers, Communions, are good, inasmuch as God wills them; hence they serve only as means to unite us to the Divine will. But all perfection, all sanctity consists in doing the will of God. In a word, the Divine will is the rule of all goodness and virtue. Because it is holy, it sanctifies all, even the most indifferent actions, when

they are done to please God. *This is the will of God, your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 3) says the Apostle. The accomplishment of the Divine will is the sanctification of your souls.

Men will, of course, cheerfully conform to the will of God in prosperity, but are afterwards unwilling to submit to it in adversity. But this is great folly; for they thus suffer doubly and without merit from the evils that befall them, since, whether they wish or do not wish it, the will of God shall be accomplished. *My counsel shall stand, and all my will shall be done*—(Is. xlvi. 10). When, then, a person in sickness does not accept his pains with patience, but gives way to anger, and complains of every one, what does he do? Does he by his impatience get rid of his pains? No: on the contrary he increases them, because by resisting the will of God he loses his peace, and still has to endure the same pains. *Who hath resisteth him and hath had peace?*—(Job ix. 4). But were he to embrace his sufferings in peace, he would feel his pains less sensibly, and would derive consolation from the thought of pleasing God, by accepting crosses from His Divine hands.

II.

Oh! what pleasure does he give to the Lord, who in the time of tribulation says with David: "*I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it.*—(Ps. xxxviii. 10). My God, I have closed my lips, and have not dared to speak, because I know that Thou hast done it. No; there is no one better able than God to promote our welfare, or that loves us more than our Creator. And let us be persuaded that whatever God does He does for our good, and because He loves us. Many things appear to us to be misfortunes, and we call them misfortunes; but if we understood the end for which God sends them, we should see that they are favours. It appeared a calamity to King Manasses to be deprived of his kingdom, and to be made a slave of the prince of the Assyrians; but these misfortunes were blessings; for after his downfall he returned to

God, and did penance for the wickedness of his life. *And after that he was in distress, he prayed to the Lord his God; and did penance exceedingly before the God of his fathers*—(2 Par. xxxiii. 12). To one who suffers from a vertigo, many things appear to be falling to pieces; and he knows not that it is his dizziness that makes them appear different from what they are in reality. Such a person may say: How does it happen that everything goes astray with me? No, I answer, but you go astray; your will is crooked; for all that happens comes from God. He does all for your welfare, but you know it not.

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

If Alphonsus so carefully watched over the spiritual progress of religious and ecclesiastics, he was equally solicitous for the rest of his flock—the laity. He made himself all things to all men in order to gain all to Christ, and as the Bull of his Canonisation testifies, he employed every means to preserve from destruction the flock committed to him. The poor and the sick were especially dear to his paternal heart, and as the same Bull testifies: "His charity to the poor was truly astonishing; they were liberally supplied by him with food, clothes, and money . . . From his own revenue he was accustomed to give young women the portion necessary to enable them to enter the marriage state; and he supported, at his own expense, young ecclesiastics of poor and humble parentage while pursuing their course of studies." Towards the close of the year 1763 the diocese of St. Agatha was visited by a severe famine, which lasted until the Spring of the following year. It was then that the holy Bishop displayed a charity that was truly heroic. The distress of the people was so great that it was feared many would die of hunger, and

in order to relieve his suffering poor Alphonsus not only sold all the furniture in his house, but even disposed of his pectoral cross and his episcopal ring. And as things grew worse instead of better, he wrote to the Sovereign Pontiff imploring to be allowed to make use of the revenues of the bishopric in feeding the poor. Meantime, to avert the wrath of God, he did not cease to exhort his people to do penance, whilst he himself added to his usual austerities, until after the lapse of six months he had appeased the Divine justice by his prayers and mortifications. But if we wished to relate all that Alphonsus did for his diocese during the thirteen years of his episcopate, we should need many volumes; suffice it to say that his efforts to relieve both the corporal and spiritual miseries of his flock were so successful that he changed the whole face of the diocese.

This devoted and untiring zeal in labouring for the good of others could not but exhaust the strength of the saintly prelate. And yet many years of life remained to him, which he was to spend in active labours for the good of his Congregation and the whole Church. His Institute advanced slowly but prosperously. From time to time new foundations were made, which were supplied with fresh subjects, whose missionary zeal produced everywhere abundant fruit. In addition to the four houses which we have already mentioned, two new ones had been established before Alphonsus had become bishop; one in the year 1755, at St. Angelo a Cupolo, near Benevento; the other at Girgenti, in Sicily. Two other foundations were made during his episcopate in the States of the Church, the first at Scifelli, in the year 1773, and the second at Frosinone, in 1776. As all these houses contained a numerous community, their government added considerably to the cares and anxieties of the holy founder.

But to these cares and anxieties, inseparable from the office of a religious superior, were now added grievous troubles of an unexpected kind. A storm of great vehemence and of long duration was about to burst upon many houses of the Institute. Certain men of

high position, but distinguished for impiety, formed a scheme for ruining the Congregation, against which they had conceived an intense hatred. The civil power was at that time by no means favourable to the Religious Orders, and it was greatly to be feared that the youngest Congregation in the kingdom of the Two Sicilies would be entirely suppressed. Alphonsus observed with anxious eye the crafty plots which were being laid for the destruction of his Institute, and left nothing undone to avert the threatened evils. His first care was to recommend his cause to God and the Blessed Virgin, and having done this he wrote letter after letter to those in authority imploring them to take under their protection the Congregation, which was assailed by such grievous calumnies. In spite of his age and infirmities, he determined to go in person to Naples, and there he remained for two months pleading the cause of his persecuted children, which was at the same time the cause of Jesus Christ and the souls for whom He died. His efforts were not unsuccessful, for though he could not obtain for his Congregation the approbation of the Government, nevertheless he succeeded in warding off from it the deadly blow which shortly after fell upon the Society of Jesus. The persecution with which his sons were threatened made him urge upon them the strictest observance of the rule. "All the opposition of men and devils," he said, "is less to be dreaded than the infraction of the smallest rule or constitution." He seized every opportunity of writing to his children circular letters, in which he vehemently exhorted them to live in a manner worthy of their holy vocation, to be zealous in cultivating all virtues, especially humility, prayer, and the love of souls, so that they might draw upon themselves the blessing of God.

In the midst of all these troubles, God, Who is wont to test the fidelity of those most dear to Him, sent him an illness that far surpassed his previous attack both in severity and in duration. This happened in the year 1768. Alphonsus, who was then seventy-two years of age, was suddenly seized with a violent attack of

sciatica, and in a short time the pain increased to such an extent that the sufferings of the venerable old man were indescribable. His pains were increased by fever, and soon the disease spread from the hips to all the other joints of the body, no portion of which was free from the excruciating torture. The head of the sick man was forced down upon his breast by these rheumatic pains, and, his beard being very thick and strong, caused a deep and painful wound in the place where his chin rested, and his whole body was so painfully contorted that, looking at him from behind, you would think his body was a trunk without a head. But Alphonsus did not give in beneath this burden of suffering. On the contrary, the more his pains increased, the more fervently did he exercise himself in acts of love for Jesus Crucified and Mary the Mother of Sorrows. He thought himself happy in being nailed to the cross with His beloved Lord and in sharing so closely in His sufferings; for, like his Crucified Saviour, he was incapable of any movement. Night and day he lay in the same position, and was found in the morning lying on the same side as on the preceding evening. For forty days this martyrdom lasted, during which time the patient sufferer gave an admirable example in his own person of the words of the Apostle : *Charity is patient; charity beareth all things, endureth all things.* Although he recovered from this severe attack, yet for the rest of his life he remained a constant sufferer both from intense bodily pains and from great mental anguish.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

We now come to consider the separate sufferings Jesus Christ endured in His Passion, and which had been

foretold for many ages by the Prophets, and especially by Isaias, in the fifty-third chapter of his Prophecy. This Prophet, as St. Irenaeus, St. Justin, St. Cyprian, and others say, spoke so distinctly of the sufferings of Our Redeemer that he seems to be another Evangelist. Hence St. Augustine says that the words of Isaias, which refer to the Passion of Jesus Christ, call rather for meditation and tears than for explanations of sacred writers; and Hugo Grotius records that even the old Hebrews themselves could not deny that Isaias (especially in the fifty-third chapter) spoke of the Messias promised by God. Some have wished to apply the passages of Isaias to persons named in Scripture and not to Jesus Christ; but Grotius answers that there is no other to be found to whom these texts may be referred.

Isaias writes: *Who hath believed our report; and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*—(Is. liii. 1). This was fulfilled, as St. John writes, when the Jews, notwithstanding all the miracles which they had seen wrought by Jesus Christ, which proved Him to be truly the Messias sent by God, would not believe in Him: *Whereas he had done so many miracles before them they believed not in him: that the word of Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled, when he said: Lord, who hath believed our report; and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*—(Jo. xii. 37, 38). Who will believe, says Isaias, what has been heard by us; and who has recognized the arm, that is, the power of the Lord? In these words he foretold the obstinacy of the Jews in not choosing to believe Jesus Christ to be their Redeemer. They fancied that this Messias would exhibit upon earth great pomp, and the splendour of His greatness and power; and that, triumphing over all His enemies, He would thus load the people of the Jews with riches and honours; but no, the Prophet adds these words to those above named: *He shall grow up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground*—(Is. liii. 2). The Jews thought that the Saviour would appear like a cedar of Libanus; but Isaias foretold He

would show Himself like a humble shrub, or a root which grows in arid soil, stripped of all beauty and splendour : *There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness*—(Is. liii. 2).

II.

He then goes on to describe the Passion of the Lord : *We have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him*—(Is. liii. 2). We desired to recognize Him, but we could not, for we have seen nothing but a Man despised and vile upon the earth, and a Man of Sorrows : *Despised, and the most abject of men —a man of sorrows; whereupon we esteemed him not* —(Is. liii. 3).

Adam, through his pride in not obeying the Divine commands brought ruin upon all men; therefore the Redeemer, by His humility, chose to bring a remedy for this great evil, and was content to be treated as the lowest and most abject of men; that is, by being reduced to the lowest depths of humiliation. Therefore St. Bernard cried out : " O Thou Who art lowest and highest ! Thou humble and sublime One ! O shame of men and glory of Angels ! None is loftier; none more humble !" If, then, adds the Saint, the Lord, Who is higher than all, has made Himself the lowest of all, each one ought to desire that all others should be preferred to himself, and fear to be preferred to any. But I, O my Jesus, fear lest any should be preferred before me, and desire to be preferred above all. O Lord, give me humility. Thou, O my Jesus, with such love, hast embraced contempt to teach me to be humble, and to love a hidden and an abject life; and shall I desire to be esteemed by all, and to display myself in everything? O my Jesus, grant me Thy love; it will make me like to Thee. Let me no more live ungrateful for the love Thou hast borne to me. Thou art Almighty; make me humble, make me holy, make me all Thine own.

Thursday—Tenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DOING GOD'S WILL, YOUR SANCTIFICATION.

Oh, how great is the peace of the soul whose will is in all things conformed to the will of God! As she wishes only what God wills, the soul always has whatever she desires; for all that happens in the world, happens by the will of God.

I.

Whom can we ever find more solicitous for our welfare and for our salvation than God? To make us understand this truth, He likens Himself at one time to a shepherd going through the desert in search of His lost sheep; at another to a mother who cannot forget her own child. *Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb*—(Is. xlix. 15). Again, to a hen gathering and sheltering her chickens under her wings, that they may suffer no injury: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not*—(Matt. xxiii. 37). In a word, according to David, God surrounds us with His good-will in order to save us from all the assaults of our enemies. *Lord, thou hast crowned us as with a shield of thy good will*—(Ps. v. 13). Why, then, do we not abandon ourselves entirely into the hands of this good Father? Would it not be folly in a blind man, placed in the midst of precipices, to reject the guidance of a father who loves him, to follow the way suggested by his own caprice?

Happy the soul that permits itself to be conducted in the way in which God leads it. Father St. Jure

relates that a certain young man, desirous of entering the Society of Jesus, was rejected because he was blind of one eye. Who would not have said that the defect was a great misfortune to the poor young man? But that defect was the occasion of the happiest end that he could meet; for on account of it he was received into the Society for the Indian Mission. He went to India, and had the happiness of dying for the Faith. The Venerable Balthazar Alvarez used to say that "the Kingdom of Heaven is the kingdom of the lame, the tempted, and the abject." Let us, then, as if blind, permit ourselves to be guided by God along whatever road, the rough or the smooth, He may be pleased to conduct us, secure of finding in it eternal salvation. St. Teresa used to say: "Our Lord never sends a cross without rewarding it with some favour, when we accept it with resignation."

II.

Oh, how great the peace of the soul whose will is in all things conformed to the will of God! As she wishes only what God wills, she always obtains whatsoever she desires; for all that happens in the world happens by the will of God. It is related that King Alphonsus the Great, being asked whom he esteemed happy in this life, wisely answered: "He who abandons himself entirely to the Divine will of God." And, in reality, does not all our inquietude arise from this cause—that things do not happen according to our wishes, and that we resist the Divine will? St. Bernard says: "God justly ordains that they who refuse to be sweetly ruled by Him should rule themselves amid difficulties and troubles." But, on the other hand, they who will only what God wills, always find their wishes accomplished, and therefore are always in peace, as well in prosperity as in adversity. When, then, you see a person in sadness, tell him that he is sad because he is not resigned to the will of God. The Saints, even in the midst of persecutions the most severe and torments the most painful, knew not what it was to be sad. And

why? Because they were united to the Divine will. *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad*—(Prov. xii. 21). Hence Cardinal Petrucci has wisely said that this frail and fleeting world is but a scene of woes. Its most pleasing amusements and pleasures have the appearance of joys, and they are torments. While in following Christ suffering may appear painful but it gives true joy.

Spiritual Reading

ST. ALPHONSUS.
THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER.

In spite of his innumerable occupations, and his almost continual ill-health, and although the great pains from which he suffered rendered him weak and languid, Alphonsus nevertheless did not cease from the labours which he had undertaken for the good of the whole Christian world. This activity is, perhaps, the thing most worthy of admiration in his wonderful life. With unconquerable ardour the heroic old man continued to work at the study of sacred literature, and to occupy himself in writing theological treatises. During the thirteen years of his episcopate he published some new work nearly every year, many of which were of great value, especially his vindication of the supreme power of the Pope against Febronius, and his dogmatic work against the so-called Reformers. In this latter work he has clearly explained the Articles of Faith defined by the Council of Trent, and has exposed with great learning the futility of the objections raised by the heretics. At the same time, in the midst of those painful sufferings which we have described above, he wrote that golden little book, *On the Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ.* It is no exaggeration to say that this book was dictated by a love which rivals that of the

seraphim, and perhaps there is no Saint who has written anything more capable of inflaming hearts with the love of their loving Redeemer. That heart must, indeed, be a stony one that remains unmoved by the touching tenderness of this pious work.

Not only did Alphonsus render important service to the Church by his writings, but he also took part in most of the great events which at that time were occupying the attention of all Christendom. It is well known that at this time the enemies of the Catholic faith were plotting in a spirit of diabolical hatred against the illustrious Society founded by St. Ignatius. Alphonsus, who regarded this Religious Order as the strongest bulwark of the Church, endeavoured by fervent prayers to Heaven to avert the threatened blow. "The plots against the Society of Jesus," said he, "come from the Jansenists, and they are conspiring not merely against the Jesuits, but against the Church herself and all civil society." Whilst Alphonsus was thus anxiously looking forward to the future, the news was brought to him, that Clement XIV, on the 21st of July, 1773, had suppressed this famous Society. This announcement was like a thunderbolt to the holy prelate; but soon regaining his composure, he adored the inscrutable decrees of Providence, and exclaimed: "The will of the Pope is the will of God." Although this sad event filled him with grief, yet he remained ever afterwards silent on the subject, and allowed no complaint to escape his lips.

Meanwhile Alphonsus learned that the Sovereign Pontiff had fallen into a state of extreme despondency, owing to the failure of his attempts to obtain peace and tranquillity by the suppression of the Jesuits. The holy Bishop felt a profound compassion for the anguish of the unfortunate Pope, and offered up many prayers for him, and begged others to do the same. God was pleased to reward this filial devotion of Alphonsus to the Vicar of Christ by an astounding miracle. On the 21st of September, 1774, after having finished his Mass, the holy old man, contrary to his usual custom, was seen

to sit down. His countenance was dejected, and he remained motionless and silent, and in this state he continued the whole of that day, and during the following night, without taking any food. His servants were naturally astonished at this unusual event, yet none of them dared to disturb him. But when the night passed away, and Alphonsus still remained in the same profound slumber, the anxiety of all became extreme. They suspected that there was something miraculous in this strange occurrence, but what it was they could not divine. In fact, Alphonsus had been rapt in ecstasy, and had been assisting in Rome at the death-bed of Clement XIV. When the Pope was dead he appeared to awake, and rang the bell to announce that he was going to say Mass. The morning was now far advanced, and on hearing the bell ring, his whole household hurried to his room. Alphonsus, surprised at this unexpected visit, inquired what was the matter. "What is the matter!" said they. "Why, your lordship has neither eaten nor spoken for two days, and you gave no signs of life." "That may be true," replied Alphonsus, "but you do not know what has happened. I have been assisting the Supreme Pontiff in his last moments, and he has just expired." Shortly afterwards the news was brought of the death of Clement XIV, which had taken place at the exact moment mentioned by Alphonsus. This marvellous prodigy of bilocation reveals the great sanctity of the holy bishop, as well as the mercy shown by Almighty God to the dying Pontiff.

On the death of Clement XIV, our Saint contributed to the election of his successor not only by his prayers, but also by an admirable letter which he wrote to Cardinal Castelli at his request. He here describes with apostolic freedom the qualifications necessary for the new Pope, in order to guide the Church safely through the difficulties which then surrounded it. The hopes of Alphonsus were not disappointed, for the new Pontiff, Pius VI, proved a worthy successor of St. Peter, and defended with heroic firmness the cause of justice and religion in spite of the bitterest persecutions and a long and weari-

some imprisonment. Scarcely had the new Pope been seated on the Chair of St. Peter, when Alphonsus addressed to him a humble petition to be relieved from the burden of the episcopate. This request, to which the former Pope had refused to listen, was now granted by Pius VI, although he did so with regret and reluctance. The holy prelate resigned without delay the heavy burden which had weighed upon him for thirteen years, and returned to Nocera, where the principal house of his Institute was situated. He had left his children a pauper, and he returned a pauper. In this beloved home he trusted he should see the end of his life's weary pilgrimage. But his sojourn on earth was as yet far from its close. Twelve long years of painful exile still remained to him. It was the will of God that Alphonsus should be, like his beloved Saviour, a man of sorrows, and that he should drink to the dregs the bitter cup of affliction.

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Isaias also called Jesus Christ *the Man of sorrows.* It is to Jesus crucified that the words of Jeremias are especially applicable : *Great as the sea is thy destruction* —(Lam. ii. 13). As all the waters of the rivers meet in the ocean, so in Jesus Christ are united all the pains of the sick, the penitential sufferings of anchorites, and all the pangs and contempt endured by Martyrs. He was laden with sorrows both of soul and body. *Thou hast brought all thy waves in upon me*—(Ps. lxxxvii. 8). " O my Father !" said our Redeemer by the mouth of David, " Thou has sent upon Me all the waves of Thy

wrath"; and therefore, in the hour of death, He said that He died in a sea of sorrow and shame: *I have come unto the depths of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me*—(Ps. lxviii. 3). The Apostle writes that Almighty God, in commanding His Son to pay for our sins with His Blood, desired thus to show how great was His justice: *Whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to the showing forth of his justice*—(Rom. iii. 25).

To form a conception of what Jesus Christ suffered in His life, and still more in His death, we must consider what the same Apostle says in his letter to the Romans: *God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and of sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh*—(viii. 3). Jesus Christ being sent by the Father to redeem man, clothed Himself with that flesh which was infected by sin; and though He had not contracted the pollution of sin, nevertheless He took upon Him the miseries contracted by human nature, as the punishment of sin; and He offered Himself to the Eternal Father, to satisfy the Divine justice for all the sins of men by His sufferings; He was offered because He Himself willed it—(Is. liii. 7), and the Eternal Father *laid upon him the iniquity of us all*—(Is. liii. 6). Behold Jesus, therefore, laden with all the blasphemies, all the sacrileges, trespasses, thefts, cruelties, and abominable deeds which men have committed and will commit. Behold Him, in a word, the object of all the Divine curses which men have deserved through their sins: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*—(Gal. iii. 13).

II.

Therefore St. Thomas writes that both the inward and outward pains of Jesus Christ exceeded all the pains which can be endured in this life. As for the external pains of the body, it is enough to know that Jesus Christ received from the Father a body prepared on purpose for suffering; and on this account He Himself said: *A body thou hast fitted to me*—(Heb. x. 5). St. Thomas remarks that our Lord suffered pains and tor-

ments in all His senses: He suffered in His sense of touch because all His flesh was torn; He suffered in His taste, with gall and vinegar; He suffered in His hearing through the blasphemies and mockeries that were offered to Him; He suffered in His sight at beholding His Mother, who was present at His death. He suffered also in all His members: His head was tortured with thorns; His hands and feet with nails, His face with buffeting and spitting, and all His body with scourging, in the way that was foretold by Isaias, who said that the Redeemer would appear in His Passion like a leper, who has no sound portion in his body, and strikes horror into every one who sees him, as a man who is all wounds from head to foot. It is enough to say that by the sight of Jesus scourged Pilate hoped to be allowed by the Jews to save Him from death, when he showed Him to the people from the balcony, saying: *Behold the man*—(Jo. xix. 5).

St. Isodore says that other men, when their pains are great and last long, through the very severity of the pain, lose all power of feeling it. But in Jesus Christ it was not so; His last sufferings were as bitter as His first, and the first stripes of His scourging were as torturing as the last; for the Passion of our Redeemer was not the work of man, but of the justice of God, Who thought fit to chastise His Son with all the severity which the sins of all mankind deserved.

Thou, O my Jesus, Thou hast desired by Thy sufferings to take upon Thee the punishment due to my sins. Thus, if I had offended Thee less, Thou wouldst have suffered less in Thy death. And knowing this, can I live henceforward without loving Thee, and without mourning continually for the offences I have committed against Thee? O my Jesus, I grieve that I have despised Thee, and I love Thee above everything. Oh, despise me not; receive me, that I may love Thee, since now I love Thee, and desire to love nothing but Thee. Too ungrateful should I be, if after all the mercies Thou hast shown me, I should henceforth love anything but Thee.

Friday—Tenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

DOING GOD'S WILL, YOUR SANCTIFICATION.

Speaking of the Saints, Salvian says: "If they are humbled, they wish their humiliation; if they are poor, they delight in their poverty; hence in every misfortune that befalls they are content, and so they begin even in this life to enjoy beatitude."

I.

Speaking of the Saints, Salvian says: "If they are humbled, they wish their humiliation; if they are poor, they delight in their poverty: hence in every misfortune which befalls them they are content, and therefore they begin even in this life to enjoy beatitude." Crosses will certainly be painful to the senses, but this pain is in the inferior part: in the superior part of the soul peace shall reign. The Saints, says Father Rodriguez, are like Mount Olympus: at the base there are storms of rain and thunder, but at the summit, which is raised above the middle region of the atmosphere, there is perpetual calm and sunshine. In a word, they are, like Jesus our Saviour, Who, in the midst of all the sorrows and ignominies of His Passion, suffered no diminution of His peace. The more the Saints suffer, the more they rejoice in spirit, knowing that in accepting their sufferings they please their Lord, Whom alone they love. This David experienced when he said: *Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me*—(Ps. xxii. 4). St. Teresa says: "And what greater good can we acquire than a testimony that we please God?" The Blessed Father Avila has written: "One *Blessed be God*! in adversity is of greater value than a thousand acts of thanksgiving in prosperity."

O my Jesus, Thy will shall henceforth be my only love. Make known to me what I must do in order to please Thee : I wish to do it. I wish to love Thee with a true love, and therefore I embrace all the tribulations Thou wilt send me. Chastise me in this life, that I may be able to love Thee for eternity. My God, give me strength to be faithful to Thee.

Mary, my Mother, to thee I recommend myself; do not cease to pray to Jesus for me.

II.

But some person says : " I accept all the crosses that come to me from God, such as losses, pains, and infirmities; but how can I bear so much ill-treatment and such unjust persecution? They that thus persecute me are certainly guilty of sin, and God does not will sin. But, I answer, do you not know that all comes from God? *Good things and evil, life and death . . . are from God* —(Ecclus. xi. 14). Prosperity and adversity, life and death, come from the Lord. It is necessary to know that in every action there is a physical entity which belongs to the material part of the action, and a moral entity that appertains to reason; the moral entity of the action, or the sin of the person who persecutes you, belongs to his malice, but the physical entity appertains to the Divine concurrence; so that God wills not the sin, but He wills that you suffer the persecution, and it is He that sends it. When his cattle were taken away from Job, God did not will the sin of the plunderers, but He willed that Job should suffer the loss. Hence, Job said : *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord*—(Job i. 21). St. Augustine remarks that Job did not say : The Lord gave, and the devil has taken away; but, *the Lord gave* and *the Lord has taken away*. The Lord did not wish the sin of the Jews who crucified Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ said to St. Peter : *The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it*?—(Jo. xviii. 11). By these words Jesus showed that His death was caused by the hands of the

Jews, but that it was sent to Him by His Eternal Father. St. Dorotheus says that they who, when they are ill-treated, seek revenge upon the man who ill-treats them, imitate the dog that bites the stone which struck him, not minding the hand by which it was thrown. In all the injuries that we receive from others we should recognize the hand of God, that sends the evil to us, and thus resign ourselves to His holy will.

My beloved Saviour, Thou hast suffered so many sorrows and reproaches for my sake, and I, on account of the miseries of this life, have so often turned my back on Thee. I thank Thee or having waited for me until now. Had I died in my sins, I could never more love Thee. Since I am now able to love Thee, I wish to love Thee with my whole heart. Accept me, O my Love, now that I return to Thee, full of sorrow for the offences I have given Thee, and full of affection and gratitude. But if, when I despised Thy love, Thou didst not cease to seek after me, how can I fear that Thou wilt cast me off, now that I desire nothing but Thy love. Thou hast borne with me so long in order that I might love Thee. Yes, I wish to love Thee. I love Thee, my God, with my whole heart, and I feel greater sorrow for having hitherto offended Thee than if I had suffered every evil in the world. O Love of my soul! I wish never more to give Thee any deliberate displeasure; and I wish to do all Thou dost wish me to do.

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

When Alphonsus found himself once more in the bosom of his Congregation at Nocera, his chief aim was to return with new ardour to all the practices of his religious life. That beloved poverty, which had been

the chief ornament of his episcopal palace, was also the sole decoration of the two little rooms which were to be his final dwelling-place. Loving God alone he cared for nothing else; whatever savoured of the world was hateful to him. Now that he was free from the heavy duties of the episcopate, he spent the greater part of his time in spiritual reading, and in holy contemplation, especially in presence of the Blessed Sacrament; for this Divine Mystery exercised over him a kind of holy violence, so that he would spend long hours in presence of his Sacramental Lord. The rest of his time was occupied either in directing his Congregation, or in writing new books; for advancing years seemed to increase rather than diminish his zeal for souls, and even in his extreme old age he published numerous works.

His retirement from the episcopate did not in any way quench the zeal of this holy man for converting and sanctifying others and for preaching the Word of God. He was never forgetful of the vow he had taken in honour of the Mother of God; and every Saturday he discoursed to the people on the glories of the Blessed Virgin. "He left nothing undone," says his biographer, Father Tannoia, "that might increase devotion to this Divine Mother, and to Jesus hidden in the Sacrament of His love." At this time, also, afflicted by the grievous ruin that was being worked by the writings of Voltaire, he wrote to Father Nonnotte, begging him not to desist from his vigorous confutation of these impious writings, since their author was the scourge and pest of the human race. Hearing that Voltaire had been converted, he wrote him a letter of congratulation, but did not send it since he found out that the report of his conversion was untrue. In a word, though broken down by age and infirmities, Alphonsus seemed once more to have returned to the vigour of youth, and applied himself without intermission to whatever he thought might be of advantage to the Church or promote the salvation of souls.

But whilst the saintly old man was thus giving vent to the final impulses of his zeal, a terrible and unex-

pected storm was about to discharge its fury upon him. This tempest was, doubtless, permitted by God, in order that Alphonsus might present to his children an example of patience as admirable as that of holy Job. We will relate in few words this painful history. The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer had, from its very commencement, to sustain the most determined opposition. Its enemies were neither few in number nor wanting in ability and influence, and if the little flock was not dispersed, it was owing to the special protection of Heaven. The Marquis Tannucci, Prime Minister of the King of Naples, was a bitter enemy of the Church and Religious Orders, but happily for the Congregation, he resigned his office, and was succeeded by the Marquis della Sambuca. The new Minister had a great esteem for Alphonsus, and thus happier days seemed about to dawn upon the rising Institute.

Since by the resignation of Tannucci the most powerful enemy of the Congregation was removed, Alphonsus thought he had no longer to fear the suppression of his houses, and that he could now establish his Institute on a permanent footing. Relying on the good-will of the Minister, della Sambuca, he determined to make every effort to attain this desirable end; and having taken the advice of the principal members of his Congregation, he sent Father Majone to Naples to treat with the Government for the approbation of his Institute. Who would ever believe that this father, after having been entrusted with so sacred a duty, betrayed the confidence placed in him, and acted the part of a traitor? Yet so it was. In order to obtain the royal approbation with greater facility, he did not shrink from making changes of the greatest importance in the rules, and this on his own responsibility, and although these rules had been solemnly confirmed by the Supreme Pontiff. He then presented the rules thus altered for the approbation of the King. Although Majone acted in this matter with the greatest secrecy and caution, yet he could not prevent some suspicion of the plot from entering the minds of certain of the fathers. They, in great anxiety, applied

to Alphonsus, begging him to be on his guard against the plots of his representative. But the holy old man could not believe Majone would be guilty of such perfidy, and he was all the more unsuspicious because he had been deceived in this matter by Father Villani, who was both his confessor and his Vicar-General. Father Majone had sent to the holy founder a copy of the new rule, which he had composed with the help of one of the King's chaplains; but this was written in such small characters that Alphonsus could not read it. He gave it, therefore, to Father Villani, who read it through; and fearing to grieve Alphonsus if he revealed the treachery, unwisely concealed it, and contented himself with saying that all was right. Thus it happened that Alphonsus believed that the anxiety of the Fathers was simply the work of the devil, and he did all in his power to allay their suspicions, which he imagined were entirely without foundation. But at length the treachery was revealed.

Meantime, joyful news was sent to Nocera by Father Majone, and Alphonsus now fondly hoped that he had arrived at the summit of his wishes. On the very day on which the mutilated rule reached Nocera—which was the 27th of February, 1780—as he was talking with some Fathers who were spending the evening recreation with him, he said that the rule would be received on Good Friday, and since it was on that day Jesus Christ shed His Blood for them, they ought also again to sacrifice themselves for Him. "Yes," said they; "but we must first read through the rule and examine it well." But when the rule had been read, they saw with indignation what extraordinary changes had been made in it. The greatest consternation spread amongst the Fathers, and before daybreak all hurried to Alphonsus informing him of the changes that had been made, and demanding that justice should be done to them. The holy old man was stupefied with astonishment. He read through the mutilated rule, and then exclaimed with floods of tears: "It is impossible; it cannot be." Then, turning to Father Villani, he said. reproachfully: "I did not think, Father

Andrew, that you would have deceived me." Afterwards addressing the community, he said with tears: "I deserve to be dragged at the horse's tail, for I ought to have read these rules myself, since I am Superior." Then, weeping bitterly, he fixed his eyes upon the crucifix: "My Jesus," he exclaimed, "it was my confessor in whom I trusted, and in whom could I have more safely confided? You know," said he, addressing the assembled Fathers, "how difficult it is for me to read even a single line." Then his tears and sobs completely choked his utterance, and he could only exclaim from time to time: "I have been deceived; I have been deceived." He then remained silent, as though he had lost his senses, and for the whole morning he remained in a state of the deepest dejection, his appearance being so altered that he seemed to be a spectre rather than a man. It was with difficulty he could be made to taste food, and what he ate was moistened with his tears. His grief became so terrible that for several days and nights he was unable to sleep, and great fears were entertained for his life.

When it got abroad that the rule had been mutilated, all the houses of the Institute were at once in a state of commotion. In order to restore peace, if possible, Alphonsus convoked a general assembly of the Fathers on May 12, 1780; but it failed entirely to secure the desired effect. Amongst the fathers assembled was one named Leggio, a man of turbulent spirit, and crafty in the extreme. This individual, concealing his abominable perfidy under the appearance of zeal, raised the standard of rebellion, and alleging the mutilation of the rule as an excuse for leaving Alphonsus, he repaired to Rome. There he succeeded in gaining the favour of the Pope, and by means of the calumnious charges which he brought against Alphonsus, he succeeded in breaking up the Congregation into two distinct parts. And that nothing might be wanting to fil up the measure of Alphonsus' sufferings, God permitted Pius VI to be deceived, and a Papal decree was issued ordering the houses in the Pontifical States to be severed from those

in the Kingdom of Naples, and declaring Alphonsus and the Neapolitan Fathers to be excluded from the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and incapable of using the privileges granted to it. Hence it followed that many of the Neapolitan Fathers left their own houses, and withdrew into those in the States of the Church. Thus was the heart of the holy founder pierced with a sword of indescribable anguish. It was, indeed, a strange sight to see Alphonsus, the ardent defender of the Holy See, disgraced by the Pope himself, and driven from the Institute which he had founded with so much labour. But all this was permitted by God in order to effect a more complete resemblance between Alphonsus and his beloved Lord, Who on earth was the most despised and abject of men. Alphonsus had himself predicted this grievous humiliation; for, talking one day with some of his fathers, who feared he might die of a severe illness which had confined him to his bed: "Do not be afraid," said he, "I shall not die yet. God wills that I should die as a subject, not as Superior."

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Observe how it was foretold by Isaias: *We have thought him as it were a leper, and as one stricken by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*—(Is. liii. 4-6). Jesus, full of love, offered Himself most willingly to accomplish His Father's will, Whose will allowed Him to be

outraged by executioners at their own pleasure. *He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer* —(Is. liii. 7). As a lamb offers itself to be shorn without complaint, so our loving Redeemer in His Passion allowed Himself to be shorn, not of wool, but of His very skin, without opening his mouth.

What obligation did He lie under to offer satisfaction for our sins? Yet He chose to take it upon Him, that He might deliver us from eternal damnation; and therefore every one of us ought to give Him thanks, and say: *Thou hast brought forth my soul, that it should not perish; Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back* —(Is. xxxviii. 17).

And thus Jesus voluntarily, through His own goodness, making Himself the debtor for our debts, chose to sacrifice Himself even to death in the pains of the Cross, as He Himself says in the Gospel of St. John: *I lay down my life; no one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself*—(Jo. x. 17, 18).

II.

St. Ambrose, writing of the Passion of our Lord, said that Jesus Christ had followers but no equals. The Saints have endeavoured to imitate Jesus Christ in suffering to render themselves like Him; but who ever attained to equalling Him in His sufferings? He truly suffered for us, more than all the penitents, all the anchorites, all the Martyrs have suffered, because God laid upon Him the weight of a rigorous satisfaction to the Divine justice for all the sins of men: *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*—(Is. liii. 6). And St. Peter writes that Jesus bore all our sins upon the Cross to pay our punishment in His most holy body: *He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree* —(1 Pet. ii. 24). St. Thomas writes that Jesus Christ, in redeeming us, chose to suffer such a death of pain and sorrow as would be sufficient to satisfy abundantly and rigorously for all the sins of the human race. And

St. Bonaventure writes : " He chose to suffer as much pain as if He Himself had committed all our sins." God Himself thought right to aggravate the pains of Jesus Christ, until they were equal to the entire payment of all our debts; and thus the prophecy of Isaias was fulfilled : *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity*—(Is. liii. 10). When we read the Lives of the Martyrs it seems at first as if some of them had suffered pains more bitter than those of Jesus Christ; but St. Bonaventure says that no Martyr's pains could ever equal in acuteness the pains of our Saviour, which were more acute than all other pains. In like manner, St. Thomas writes that the sufferings of Christ were the most severe pains that can be felt in this present life. Upon which St. Laurence Justinian writes that in each of the torments which our Lord endured, on account of the agony and intensity of the suffering, He suffered as much as all the tortures of Martyrs. And all this was predicted by King David when, speaking in the person of Christ, he said : *Thy wrath is strong over me; Thy terrors have troubled me*—(Ps. lxxxvii. 8, 17). Thus all the wrath God had conceived against our sins, poured itself out upon the person of Jesus Christ; and thus we must interpret what the Apostle said : He was *made a curse for us*—(Gal. iii. 13), that is, the object of all the curses deserved by our sins.

Saturday—Tenth Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL SINNERS.

St. Bernard exhorts even the despairing not to despair, and full of joy and tenderness towards his most

dear Mother Mary, he lovingly exclaims: "And, who, O Lady, can be without confidence in thee, seeing that thou dost assist even those who are in despair! Let him, then, who is without hope, hope in thee!"

I.

It is related in the Sacred Scriptures that Booz allowed Ruth *to gather the ears of corn, after the reapers*—(Ruth ii. 3). St. Bonaventure says "that as Ruth found favour with Booz, so has Mary found favour with our Lord, and is also allowed to gather the ears of corn after the reapers. The reapers followed by Mary are all evangelical labourers, missionaries, preachers, and confessors, who are constantly reaping souls for God. But there are some hardened and rebellious souls which are abandoned even by these. To Mary alone it is granted to save them by her powerful intercession." Truly unfortunate are they if they do not allow themselves to be gathered, even by this sweet Lady. They will indeed be most certainly lost and accursed. But, on the other hand, blessed is he who has recourse to this good Mother. "There is not in the world," says the devout Blosius, "a sinner, however rebellious and wicked, who is despised or rejected by Mary; she can, she has the desire, and she knows how to reconcile him to her most beloved Son, if only he will seek her assistance."

O most pure Virgin Mary, I venerate thy most holy heart, which was the delight and resting-place of God, thy heart, overflowing with humility, purity, and Divine love. I, an unhappy sinner, approach thee with a heart all loathsome and wounded. O compassionate Mother, disdain me not on this account; let such a sight rather move thee to greater tenderness, and excite thee to help me. Do not wait to find virtues or merit in me before assisting me. I am lost, and the only thing I merit is hell. See only my confidence in thee and the determination I have to amend. Consider all that Jesus has done and suffered for me, and then abandon me if thou canst. I offer thee all the pains of His life; the cold He endured in the stable; His journey into Egypt;

the Blood He shed; the poverty, sweat, sorrows, and death He endured for me; and this in thy presence. For the love of Jesus, take charge of my salvation.

II.

With reason, O my most sweet Queen, did St. John Damascene salute and call thee the "Hope of those who are in despair." With reason did St. Laurence Justinian call thee "the Hope of malefactors," and another ancient writer "the only Hope of Sinners." St. Ephrem calls her "the safe harbour for all sailing on the sea of the world." This last-named Saint also calls her "the consolation of those who are to be condemned." With reason, finally does St. Bernard exhort even the despairing not to despair; and, full of joy and tenderness towards his most dear Mother, he lovingly exclaims: "And who, O Lady, can be without confidence in thee, since thou assistest even those who are in despair? And I doubt not, that whenever we have recourse to thee, we shall obtain all that we desire. Let him, then, who is without hope, hope in thee." St. Antoninus relates that there was a sinner who was at enmity with God, and who had a vision in which he found himself before the dread tribunal; the devil accused him, and Mary defended him. The enemy produced the catalogue of his sins; it was thrown into the scales of Divine Justice, and weighed far more than all his good works. But then his great advocate, extending her sweet hand, placed it on the balance, and so caused it to turn in favour of her client; giving him thereby to understand that she would obtain his pardon if he changed his life; and this he did after the vision, and was entirely converted.

Ah, my Mother, I will not and cannot fear that thou wilt reject me, a sinner, now that I have recourse to thee and ask thy help. Did I fear this, I should be offering an outrage to thy mercy, which goes in quest of the wretched, in order to help them. O Lady, deny not thy compassion to one to whom Jesus has not denied His Blood. But the merits of this Blood will not be

applied to me unless thou recommendest me to God. Through thee do I hope for salvation. I ask not for riches, honours, or earthly goods. I seek only the grace of God, love towards Thy Son, the accomplishment of His will, and His heavenly kingdom, that I may love Him eternally. Is it possible that thou wilt not hear me? No; for already thou hast granted my prayer, as I hope; already thou prayest for me; already thou obtainest me the graces I ask; already thou takest me under thy protection. My Mother, abandon me not. Never, never cease to pray for me, until thou seest me safe in Heaven at thy feet, blessing and thanking thee forever. Amen.

Spiritual Reading

THE DOCTOR AND APOSTLE OF PRAYER. ST. ALPHONSUS.

Meanwhile Pius VI had appointed a new Superior for the Congregation, Father Francis de Paula. Alphonsus at once submitted to him with the most profound humility, and since he had not yet lost the hope of re-establishing unity in his Congregation, he made every effort to bring this about by proving his own innocence and that of his companions. But all was in vain. Leggio, who was now Procurator for the houses in the Pontifical States, had succeeded so well with his perfidious schemes, that he obtained a Papal degree ordering things to be left as they were, and forbidding any further petitions on the subject to be received. Thus all hope of a reconciliation vanished; and Alphonsus, with heroic patience, resigned himself to the Divine will, offering to God the sacrifice of this work, which had cost him the labours and anxieties of fifty years. God rewarded the perfect submission of His servant by granting him to see, in prophetic vision, that unity which was not to be

effected in his lifetime. For one day he expressly foretold that after his death his disunited family would once more be joined together under one head—a prophecy that was fulfilled in the year 1793. When Alphonsus was dead, the Pope learned too late the real state of affairs, and exclaimed with grief: "I have persecuted a Saint!"

But the troubles of the holy man were not yet at an end. A new and still more cruel martyrdom awaited him. It seemed as though Divine Providence had decreed that in Alphonsus should be produced a perfect image of Christ crucified. In the midst of the sufferings occasioned him by the troubles of his Congregation, he had also to endure in his soul the grievous trial of temptations and bitter anguish of mind. He was assailed by a dark and gloomy feeling of despair, which attacked him so vehemently and so persistently, that all who saw him were moved to pity. But the soldier of Christ had recourse to the weapon of prayer, and thus succeeded in winning the victory. Yet this temptation to despair was followed by another not less dreadful. Alphonsus began to be tortured by scruples of every description. God permitted that his intellect should be overshadowed by the thickest darkness, so that everything he wished to do seemed to him unlawful, and everywhere he thought he saw sin and the occasions of sin, and was constantly being racked by the doubt whether he had not lost the grace of God. These scruples so tortured him that he appeared as though in agony, and would fix his sorrowful eyes on the Crucifix, and exclaim with a tearful voice: "My Jesus, suffer me not to be lost." The holy old man was tempted by thoughts of vainglory, presumption, disbelief, and (who would believe it?) by the sting of the flesh. One day when he was suffering from this last-named temptation, he cried out piteously: "Alas! I am eighty-eight years of age, and the fire of my youth is still burning in me. O Mary, unless thou help me, I shall become worse than Judas." That nothing might be wanting to his sufferings he was assaulted also by many diabolical appari-

tions. These trials, more bitter than death itself, lasted for more than a year. But at the end of this time God took pity on his servant, and drew him out of this state of darkness to place him in one of peace and bliss and consolations. From this time he had frequent ecstasies, uttered prophecies, and worked many miracles.

But the fruit was now ripe for Heaven, and the time had come for gathering it. The Saint's long and weary pilgrimage at length was at an end. "When he had reached the ninety-first year of his life, now hastening to its close," says the Bull of his Canonisation, "he was compelled to keep his bed, pressed down as he was by the weight of years, and suffering from a grievous malady. Having endured with incredible patience the excruciating pains of his illness, and having earnestly exhorted the brethren of the Religious Society which he had founded to the practice of every virtue, he was refreshed by the Viaticum of the Most Holy Eucharist, and fortified by the Sacrament of Extreme Unction." On his deathbed he displayed the same virtues which he had practised in the whole course of his life. He prayed without ceasing, and kept up tender colloquies with Jesus Christ and His Virgin Mother, and with his other holy patrons as though they had been present at his bedside.

And now a final consolation was to be granted him. He had frequently during life implored his beloved Mother Mary to be with him at the moment of his death. "Oh, consoler of the afflicted," he exclaimed, "do not abandon me in the last moment of my life. Bestow upon me the grace of invoking thee in that moment with greater eagerness, and grant that I may die with the sweetest Names of Jesus and Mary upon my lips. But there is yet a greater favour that I beg of thee, my Lady. Pardon, I beseech thee, my boldness. Come thyself in that hour, and console me with thy presence. Thou hast granted this favour to many of thy clients, and therefore I expect it of thee. I am indeed unworthy to obtain it, but I am thy devoted servant. I love thee, and place in thee all my hopes.

O Mary, I expect thee; do not refuse me this consolation." The prayers of her beloved son were heard by the Mother of Mercy. On the day before Alphonsus died, as he was holding in his hands a picture of the Blessed Virgin, his face was suddenly seen to glow with an unusual brightness, and smiling sweetly at the picture the holy old man began to address his beloved Mother as though she were really present. From that moment his fervour increased as the moment of death drew near, and so frequently and so lovingly did he kiss the sacred pictures of Jesus and Mary that it seemed as though he could never satisfy the ardour of his love. The dying moments of the aged Saint could not be called an agony; for, instead of struggling with death, he was, as it were, rapt in a heavenly ecstasy in which a foretaste was granted him of the joys of Paradise. He lay upon his deathbed calmly reposing in a peaceful slumber, until, at the sound of the *Angelus,* amid the sobs of his children, who had hurried from their various houses to his dying-bed, his saintly soul took its flight to Heaven, and there was united to Jesus and Mary, whom on earth he had loved with such faithful devotion. He died on the 1st of August, at mid-day, in the year 1787, at the age of ninety years, ten months, and five days.

Scarcely had Alphonsus quitted this mortal life when many persons of high position, moved by the ever-increasing opinion of his sanctity, petitioned Pius VI to institute a juridical inquiry into the holy life of the servant of God. The Supreme Pontiff granted their requests, and such was the success of the investigation that Alphonsus was declared Venerable nine years after his death. In the year 1803 a solemn decree was issued by the Holy See, declaring that after a most diligent examination nothing worthy of censure was to be found in all the works of the holy prelate. Thirteen more years elapsed, and then the Venerable servant of God was beatified by Pius VII; and finally, on the 26th of May, 1839, being the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, he was canonised by Gregory XVI, and his feast ordered to be kept by the Universal Church on the 2nd of

August. The canonisation would have taken place at an earlier date had it not been for the disturbed state of the Christian world at that time. As it was, hardly fifty-two years had elapsed since his holy death.

One would have thought that nothing now could be added to the honours of Alphonsus on earth. But our Lord Jesus Christ, who delights in exalting the humble, after having glorified the holy life of Alphonsus, willed that his writings also should share in this glorification, since they had been written solely for the love of God and for the good of souls. The Saint had been the author of a large number of works on almost every subject relating either to dogmatic theology, controversy, or morals. He had composed commentaries on Holy Scripture, and various ascetical treatises remarkable for the simplicity of their style. All that the holy author has written has a special value, not only on account of the heavenly unction which pervades all his writings, but also on account of the clear and precise manner in which he treats the most abstruse questions, and the weighty arguments with which he supports his theses. The works of St. Alphonsus were in a short space of time translated into many languages, and passed through innumerable editions, and were soon well known throughout the whole Christian world. Thus it came to pass that more than seven hundred bishops of all nations petitioned the Holy See to bestow upon St. Alphonsus the glorious title of Doctor of the Church. This was accordingly done by the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IX, in the year 1871, after all the works of "the most zealous doctor" (a title justly due to the Saint) had been subjected to a new and most rigorous examination. In the Apostolic Brief of the Doctorate occur the following words, which will form a fitting conclusion to this Life of the Saint: "Christ our Lord, Who has promised that He will never be wanting to His Church, when He sees that His Immaculate Spouse is in need of a special assistance, is wont to raise up for her defence men illustrious for their virtue and learning, who, 'filled with the spirit of understanding, pour forth the words of their wisdom as

showers.' It was owing to this merciful Providence of Almighty God, that, at the very time when the doctrines of Jansenistic innovators were drawing all eyes upon them and deceiving many by their seductive errors—that in this moment of peril Alphonsus Mary Liguori stood forth to 'fight the good fight' and to 'open his mouth in the midst of the Church.' By those learned writings which cost him so much labour, he did all in his power to uproot and destroy these poisonous seeds which a diabolical malice had sown in the field of the Lord. And not content with this, Alphonsus, who thought only of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, wrote many books replete with learning and piety. He pointed out to those whose office it is to direct the souls of the faithful a safe path which they might tread without stumbling, and thus might avoid the snares of a too lax or too rigid code of morals. He instructed the clergy in their duties and in the dignity of their high office. He defended the Truths of our holy religion by works both dogmatic and polemical. He asserted the rights of this Apostolic See, and enkindled in the souls of the faithful the flame of true piety. It may truly be said that there is not a single error of these times which has not been, at least in great part, refuted by Alphonsus. Those dogmatic decrees regarding the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Mother of God, and the Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, when teaching *ex cathedra,* which were issued by us amid the applause of the Christian people, and with the approving acclamations of the bishops of the whole Catholic world, are not these dogmas to be found in the writings Alphonsus most clearly set forth, and proved by unanswerable arguments? Hence, to him may be applied with admirable fitness that glorious eulogy of Divine Wisdom: 'The memory of him shall not depart away, and his name shall be in request from generation to generation. Nations shall declare his wisdom, and the Church shall show forth his praise.' "—(Ecclus. xxxix. 13).

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Hitherto we have spoken only of the outward bodily pains of Jesus Christ. And who can ever explain and comprehend the inward pains of His soul, which a thousand times exceeded His outward pains? This inward torment was such that in the Garden of Gethsemane it caused a sweat of Blood to pour forth from all His body, and compelled Him to say that this was enough to cause His death: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death* —(Matt. xxvi. 38). And since this anguish was enough to cause death, why did He not die? St. Thomas answers that He did not die because He Himself prevented His own death, being ready to preserve His life, in order to give it by and by upon the tree of the Cross. This sorrow also which most deeply afflicted Jesus Christ in the Garden, afflicted Him also throughout His whole life; since, from the first moment when He began to live, He had ever before His eyes the causes of His inward grief; among which the most afflicting was the sight of the ingratitude of men towards the love He showed them in His Passion.

An Angel came to comfort Him in the Garden, as St. Luke relates—(Luke xxii. 43). Yet Venerable Bede says that this comfort, instead of lightening His pains, increased them. The Angel, indeed, strengthened Him to suffer with greater constancy for the salvation of men; upon which Bede remarks that Jesus was then strengthened for suffering by a representation of the greatness of the fruits of His Passion, without the least diminution of the greatness of His sufferings. Therefore the Evangelist relates that immediately after the appearance of the Angel, Jesus Christ was in an agony,

and sweated blood in such abundance that it trickled down upon the ground—(Luke xxii. 43, 44).

St. Bonaventure further relates that the Agony of Jesus then reached its height; so that our afflicted Lord, at the sight of the anguish He must suffer at the termination of His life, was so terrified that He prayed His Divine Father that He might be delivered from it: *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me*—(Matt. xxvi. 39). Yet He said this, not that He might be delivered from the pains, for He had already offered Himself to suffer them—*He was offered because he himself willed*—but to teach us to understand the agony which He experienced in enduring this death so bitter to the senses; while in order to accomplish the will of His Father, and to obtain for us the salvation He so ardently desired, He immediately added: *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*—(Matt. xxvi. 39). And He continued thus to pray and to resign Himself for the space of three hours: *He prayed the third time, saying the same word*—(Matt. xxvi. 44).

II.

But let us continue the Prophecy of Isaias. He foretold the blows, the buffetings, the spitting, and the other insults which Jesus Christ endured the night before His death from the hands of the executioners, who kept Him in bondage in the palace of Caiphas, in order to take Him the next morning to Pilate, and to have Him condemned to death. *I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me*—(Is. l. 6). These insults are described by St. Mark, who adds that these soldiers, treating Jesus as a false prophet, in order to mock Him, covered His face with a cloth, and then, striking Him with blows and buffetings, bade Him prophesy who it was that smote Him—(Mark xiv. 65).

Isaias goes on to speak of the death of Jesus Christ: *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter*—(Is. liii. 7). The eunuch of Queen Candace, as we read in the Acts

of the Apostles, considering this passage, asked St. Philip, who, by a Divine inspiration, had come to join him, of whom were these words to be understood, and the Saint then explained to him the whole Mystery of the Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. Thereupon the eunuch, being enlightened by God, desired at once to be baptized.

Isaias continues, and foretells the great fruits which the world would derive from the death of the Saviour, and says that from it great numbers of Saints would be spiritually born: *Because his soul hath laboured he shall see and be filled; by his knowledge shall this my just servant justify many, and he shall bear their iniquities*—(Is. liii. 10, 11).

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